NATION

Safe footpath a fundamental right: SC

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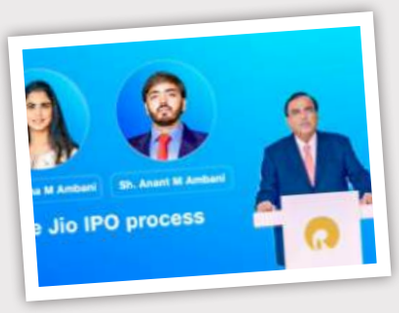
BUSINESS

Reliance bets big on AI; Jio gets $4B IPO

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

Red cards and poor defence send Qatar to its worst World Cup loss

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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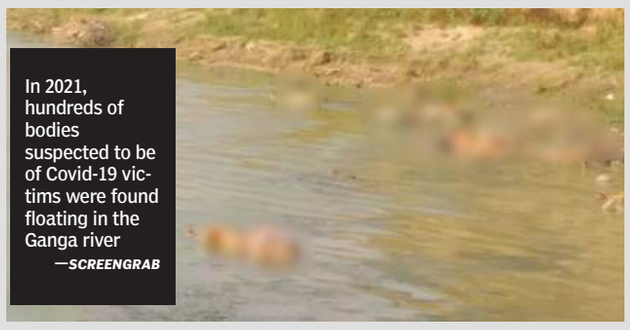
ACCIDENTAL LAB LEAK?

Tulsi Gabbard alleges Fauci funded research caused Covid



In 2021, hundreds of bodies suspected to be of Covid-19 victims were found floating in the Ganga river —SCREENGRAB

WASHINGTON, 19 JUNE

Outgoing US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard has accused former White House chief medical adviser Dr Anthony Fauci of directing millions of dollars of taxpayer funding towards gain-of-function research at China's Wuhan Institute of Virology and misleading Congress about his role.

, Gabbard alleged that Fauci, while serving as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), oversaw funding for research involving bat coronaviruses at the Wuhan laboratory.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released a tranche of declassified documents and communications which it said showed Fauci's involvement in the research and his influence over intelligence assessments on the origins of Covid-19. The ODNI claimed the Wuhan research is "now widely viewed" as the source of an unintentional laboratory leak that triggered the pandemic. It also alleged Fauci worked with "politicised career leadership" within the intelligence community to suppress information related to the virus's origins and his role in funding the research. The office said it had received testimony from intelligence whistleblowers who alleged retaliation for challenging official assessments on Covid-19's origins. It further claimed that declassified correspondence contradicts Fauci's testimony before the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic. —*ANI*

NATIONS WITH THE MOST COVID DEATHS

US:	11.23 lakh
Brazil:	7 lakh
India:	5.33 lakh
Russia:	3.98 lakh
Mexico:	3.33 lakh

*WHO data

TN adopts resolution against Mekedatu dam

CHENNAI, 19 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Friday adopted a unanimous resolution against Karnataka's move to construct a dam across river Cauvery at Mekedatu, expressing support for all measures undertaken by the state government on the issue. Chief Minster C Joseph Vijay piloted the government resolution over the nearly 13 years long dispute with the neighbouring state, with the members of the opposition, including Leader of the Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin and AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami backing the government. The Congress too supported the ruling TVK in the Assembly, taking a contradictory stand opposing the Karnataka Congress government which is keen on pursuing the balancing reservoir project. —*PTI*

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India's AI Summit was disorganised: Anthropic CEO

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei has described the stage management at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 as "extremely disorganised", recounting an awkward moment when he and OpenAI chief Sam Altman appeared reluctant to hold hands during a group photograph. In an interview with Bloomberg Originals, Amodei said participants were brought on stage abruptly and their positions were repeatedly changed. He added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi unexpectedly asked the technology leaders to raise their joined hands for the photo, catching them off guard. Amodei stressed that the incident had nothing to do with rivalry between the CEOs and clarified that he was not singling out India, saying most international summits involving heads of state face similar organisational challenges. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 7

PM says 70L jobs created under PM-VBRY

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY) has generated over 70 lakh jobs across India. He also transferred incentives worth Rs 2,400 crore to 15 lakh first-time employees and their employers via direct benefit transfer. Modi emphasised that collaboration between government, youth, and industry boosts job creation. He stated, "Through PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana, we are supporting employment generation, empowering youth and building a stronger workforce for the future." —*PTI*

US, Iran talks called off as Israel bombs Lebanon

Hezbollah, Israel agree for new truce after 47 dead in Lebanon

JERUSALEM, 19 JUNE

Planned talks between the US and Iran in Switzerland were called off on Friday after fierce fighting erupted between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, casting fresh doubt over an interim agreement aimed at ending the wider regional conflict. Iranian officials cancelled their trip, insisting the violence must stop before negotiations resume, while US Vice President JD Vance also scrapped his visit at the last moment.

At least 47 people were killed in Lebanon in a series of Israeli air strikes, while Israel said four of its soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel, died in fighting near the southern city of Nabatiyeh.

The Israeli military said it struck 80 Hezbollah-linked targets overnight and killed "dozens" of militants. Hezbollah said it targeted Israeli tanks and positions in response to what it called Israeli ceasefire violations.

Later in the day, two regional officials and a US official said Israel and Hezbollah had agreed to a ceasefire mediated by Qatar, the US and Iran. A Hezbollah official confirmed efforts were under way to implement a new truce but stopped short of saying it had taken effect. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office did not immediately comment.

The clashes are viewed as the most precarious element of the interim Iran deal. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah is a signatory, but the agreement is meant to halt fighting across the region and pave the way for a permanent settlement.

The interim deal has already halted hostilities in Iran and the Gulf and reopened the Strait of Hormuz after months of disruption that triggered a global energy crisis. More than 12.5 million barrels of oil passed through the waterway on Wednesday night, according to US figures, though normal trade is expected to take weeks or months to resume fully.

Netanyahu vowed Israel would exact a "very heavy price" from Hezbollah and reiterated that Israeli troops would remain in a security zone in southern Lebanon as long as required. Iran has insisted Israel must withdraw completely.

The Switzerland talks are expected to focus on Iran's nuclear programme, the core issue behind the war . —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5 & 6

The Israeli military said it struck 80 Hezbollah-linked targets —PTI

Hormuz: Iranian body asks ships to register

A new Iranian authority charged with overseeing the strait issued guidance Friday calling on ships to register with it even as transits are currently free — signalling Tehran's intent to likely start charging. The notice came from the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, a new agency in the Islamic Republic.

HC backs Centre over Telegram ban

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The Delhi High Court on Friday upheld the Centre's move to temporarily restrict access to the Telegram messaging app ahead of the 21 June NEET-UG re-exam, holding the order was "not disproportionate".

Orally pronouncing the substantive portions of the verdict, a vacation bench headed by Tejas Karia said, "After considering all the arguments, we find that given the emergency nature, the reasons supplied are sufficient and the government has followed the procedure in Section 69A."

Section 69A of the Indian Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, empowers the Centre to block public access to any online information, websites, or applications to protect national security, public order, and sovereignty. The judge said Telegram's plea claiming non-supply of reasons cannot be held to be true.

Telegram had moved the court, citing discriminatory treatment and a breach of Article 14 for being singled out among social media intermediaries. Telegram claimed to have held multiple meetings with government agencies from May onwards and submitted detailed responses outlining both proactive and reactive moderation measures. After receiving specific URLs from authorities on 9 June, it removed the flagged content within an hour, Telegram claimed.

During the arguments on Thursday, the court had posed a question to the Solicitor General about the correctness of curtailing the rights of over 150 million Telegram users because a set of students were going to appear in the re-exam. —*PTI*

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NTA TO HOLD NATIONWIDE MOCK DRILL

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct a nationwide mock drill on Saturday ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination on 21 June to ensure the smooth, secure and transparent conduct of the test.

The pen-and-paper examination will be held from 2pm to 5.15pm across 551 cities in India and 14 overseas centres for over 22.79 lakh candidates. Candidates with disabilities eligible for compensatory time will be allowed to write till 6.20 pm.

The NTA said more than two lakh personnel, including police and district administration officials, have been deployed. A total of 674 city coordinators and 6,669 observers will oversee operations. Security measures include GPS-enabled vehicles with police escorts for transporting confidential materials, CCTV surveillance linked to central control rooms, Aadhaar-based biometric authentication and mandatory frisking with metal detectors. —*PTI*

DKS orders action against misuse of guarantees

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday instructed officials that action should be taken against those who are misusing the five guarantees of the Congress government. He, however, made it clear that no eligible beneficiary should be made to face any kind of hardship in the process. This was said during a review meeting held by the Chief Minister.

During the meeting it emerged that many of the beneficiaries had taken bank loans, which could be automatically adjusted against their loan accounts. However some of the beneficiaries had changed their bank accounts to avail the benefits of the scheme. Such beneficiaries should not face any inconvenience, Shivakumar told officials.

It was also pointed out that when the Gruha Jyoti was implemented, precautions were taken to prevent large-scale misuse. "Gruha Lakshmi payments are also being credited to beneficiaries who have passed away. Hence such misuse must be stopped," a statement from the Chief Minister's office said.

The CM directed officials that as soon as the Gruha Lakshmi amount is credited to a beneficiary's account, confirmation should be sent to their mobile phone through a voice message.

Officials informed him that cases have been detected in which UPI accounts opened through Airtel Bank are being misused.

"It has been found that money is being transferred to accounts in other states. Such transactions must be stopped," the statement said. —*PTI*

CM DK Shivakumar and his wife Usha at visit Tirumala Tirupati temple on Friday —SALAR

BJP SUMMONS VIJAYENDRA AFTER CROSS-VOTING IN MLC POLLS

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

BJP President Nitin Nabin has summoned Karnataka party chief Vijayendra Yediyurappa and some other leaders over cross-voting in the state Legislative Council polls in favour of Congress candidate Karthik Prakash.

Nabin has taken a serious exception to the issue and asked Yediyurappa and other leaders to meet him on 23 June here. BJP also formed a three-member committee of MLC C T Ravi, BJP state vice president N Mahesh, and MLA Mahesh Tenginkayi on Friday to probe the matter.

In the MLC polls, the ruling Congress on Thursday won five of the seven seats, while the opposition BJP bagged two.

The results brought to light cross-voting by BJP and JD(S) legislators in favour of Congress candidates, as the total number of votes received by the ruling party was 151, which is 11 votes more than the expected 140 votes, sources said. They added that three BJP and eight JD(S) MLAs allegedly cross-voted. BJP leader R Ashoka on Thursday said that those who betrayed the party will be identified and action will be taken. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

ACCIDENTAL FALL

Two workers drown at BWSSB sewage plant in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

Two workers, in their 30s, were feared drowned after they allegedly fell into a sewage pumping wet well while cleaning it at a BWSSB treatment plant here, police said on Friday. They deceased have been identified as Brijesh, a native of Bihar, and Akhilesh from Tamil Nadu.

According to officials, three workers were engaged in cleaning a 40-foot-deep sewage pumping wet well at the 90 MLD-capacity Bellandur Sewage Treatment Plant of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board, located at Belagere in Varthur on Thursday evening, when Brijesh and Akhilesh accidentally slipped and fell into the wet well. The third worker was rescued safely and shifted to a hospital for treatment where he is stated to be stable, a senior police officer said.

Following the incident, BWSSB has constituted a three-member committee comprising senior officials to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the accident. —*PTI*

SC's Aravalli panel faces scrutiny over lack of independent experts

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Scientists, environmentalists, policy experts, and stakeholders across India have written to the Chief Justice of India (CJI), raising concerns over the composition of the Supreme Court-appointed high-powered expert committee reviewing the Centre's report on the Aravalli hill range.

The letters, sent on Friday, call for changes to the panel's makeup, citing worries about its independence. The committee, formed under the Supreme Court's May 25 order, is led by Kanchan Devi, Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, with a deadline to submit its report by 31 August. —*PTI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

Bengaluru's next phase of growth will be driven by stronger partnerships between government and the private sector... As our City expands and attracts greater investment, talent and innovation, we must focus on creating efficient mobility system

—PRIYANK KHARGE,
HOME & IT/BT MINISTER

Krishna runs dry as M'rashta water crisis spills into K'taka

BELAGAVI, 19 JUNE

The Krishna River, a major irrigation source for northern Karnataka, has run dry, raising the possibility of drinking water shortages in the taluks of Athani, Chikkodi, Raibagh and Kagawad in Belagavi district.

Every summer, Maharashtra releases around 2 TMC ft of water into the Krishna, which also runs through Andhra Pradesh, benefiting districts in the Kittur Karnataka and Kalyana Karnataka regions. This arrangement has been in place for several years.

However, water availability in the Koyna Reservoir, from which Maharashtra usually releases water, has declined significantly this year as the state grapples with a water crisis. The reservoir, Maharashtra's largest, has a storage capacity of 105 TMC ft (thousand million cubic feet), but its current storage is considerably lower than usual.

However, the Hippargi Reservoir, which supplies water to the Krishna basin taluks, currently has only 0.08 TMC ft of water in storage, Belagavi Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Roshan told reporters on Friday. However, he noted that the Hidkal and Malaprabha reservoirs have sufficient reserves to meet drinking water requirements until 20 July. The district administration is also prepared to supply safe drinking water through tankers if required, he added.

Roshan said that Chief Minister DK Shivakumar is likely to discuss the issue with Maharashtra counterpart Devendra Fadnvis on Sunday, and request that Mumbai releases the 2 TMC ft into the Krishna River. *—Salar News*

"The delayed monsoon has also affected agricultural operations in the district. Only 40-45% of the sowing has been completed so far

-Mohammed Roshan, Belagavi DC

After poll loss, JD(S) to focus on Gen Z: HDK

Says he fielded candidate to test loyalty

MYSURU, 19 JUNE

Union Minister and JD(S) State unit Chief HD Kumaraswamy on Friday said he would build his party back up with Gen Z leaders, a day after BJP-JD(S) bloc was left in tatters in a humiliating defeat in Legislative Council polls.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Mysuru, he said that the party fielded a candidate to test the loyalty of MLAs, and was not surprised by the cross-voting on Thursday.

"I expected this cross-voting in the elections. I am not surprised or I by these results," Kumaraswamy said. "Our party has fielded our candidates to keep our flock together, to test the loyalty of party MLAs. This election has also exposed the true colours of some MLAs".

The Congress won five of the seven Legislative Council seats that went to polls, while the BJP secured two seats and the JD(S) failed to win a seat on Thursday. The results exposed cross-voting by legislators from the opposition BJP and JD(S), helping the Congress secure 151 votes, 11 more than its expected tally of 140.

Kumaraswamy said he had information about who cross-voted from his party. "Four people have cross-voted. I know who they are. I also know they have discussed quitting the party. Let those who want to go, go."

The Union Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises Minister, however, said he would turn to Gen Z leaders.

"I know how to build the party. I will build the party with Gen Z," he asserted. "I have decided that greater priority must be given to the youth in this party and to new faces. New people will come."

He said that his father and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda was attached to the party, and his long-standing trust in party leaders and workers had often prevented harsh action against them despite repeated setbacks.

However, Kumaraswamy said he would take a stand against disgruntled MLA GT Devegowda, who, he accused, was "misusing" his father's trust.

Kumaraswamy also hinted at his likely return to State politics. *—Salar News*

If Congress won by buying 11 such votes, then it is a victory of democracy. If someone comes to the BJP and votes for us and wins, then it becomes unconstitutional. Their victory is constitutional; our victory is unconstitutional. What is this?

-Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, LoP in the Legislative Council

'K'TAKA ACTING UNILATERALLY'

TN Assembly adopts resolution against Mekedatu

CHENNAI, 19 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Friday adopted a unanimous resolution against Karnataka's move to construct a dam across river Cauvery at Mekedatu, with all parties expressing support for measures undertaken by the state government on the issue.

Chief Minster C Joseph Vijay piloted the government resolution over the nearly 13 years long dispute with the neighbouring state, with the members of the Opposition, including LoP Udhayanidhi Stalin and AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami backing the government.

Ironically, the Congress in Tamil Nadu supported Vijay's resolution, even though it is in power in Karnataka as well.

The resolution said that House records its "strong objection to (Karnataka's) unilateral attempt to construct a dam across the Cauvery River... without respecting the Final Award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal... and the Supreme Court".

It said Karnataka acted without obtaining the concurrence of the concerned basin states, and had also not secured any approval from the Centre. Such an action is "not at all acceptable."

It urged the Union Government to not grant any form of approval, "including technical and environmental clearances", to the Mekedatu Dam Project. The House further urged the Central Water Commission not to examine, process, or grant approval to the Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted by Karnataka regarding the project.

Four Tamil Nadu chief ministers in the past moved unanimous resolutions against the Mekedatu dam. *— PTI*

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay moves the resolution against the Mekedatu dam, in his assembly, on Friday *—PTI*

DK Shivakumar, was the much-publicised Mekedatu Padayatre a genuine fight for Karnataka, or merely a political gimmick for votes? Today, when your own party and alliance partners are undermining the project, why are you silent? Does your commitment to Karnataka end where your obedience to the Congress high command begins?

-R Ashoka, LoP in Karnataka

State clears 55 industrial projects worth Rs 7,506 cr

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

Karnataka has approved 55 industrial projects involving investments of Rs 7,506 crore, expected to generate over 28,000 jobs, Industries Minister MB Patil said on Friday. The State-Level Single Window Clearance Committee cleared the proposals, with 41 projects located outside Bengaluru under the government's "Beyond Bengaluru" initiative. Four projects involve foreign direct investment worth Rs 314.46 crore from companies based in Taiwan, South Korea, Germany and Japan, creating 503 jobs. The approved projects are largely in aerospace, electronics and engineering sectors. Major investments include Kaynes Electronics in Chamarajanagar, SFO Technologies in Doddaballapura, Orbit Industrial Park in Kolar, Terra Circuits in Vijayapura and Bellatrix Aerospace in Bengaluru Rural. Five expansion projects worth Rs 223.61 crore were also cleared. *—PTI*

3 held for making AI content of actress Vasanth

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

Three men have been arrested for allegedly creating and circulating objectionable AI-generated images and videos of Kannada actress Rukmini Vasanth on social media, police said on Friday. The accused, identified as Ravikumar, 24; Chandrakanth, 33; and Ranjith, 25, were arrested following a complaint filed by the actress last month. A case was registered by the Cyber Crime Police. Police said the content was created using artificial intelligence to portray the actress in a derogatory manner. CID Cyber Command chief Pronab Mohanty said a special team traced the accused through digital evidence. Three mobile phones were seized and further investigation continues. *—PTI*

— MOHAMMED ASAD

POLLUTING LAKES, RIVERS? YOU WILL BE BOOKED: KHANDRE

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

Rural development Minister Eshwar Khandre directed officials to register criminal cases against those responsible for polluting lakes, rivers and reservoirs by dumping biomedical and electronic waste.

During a surprise visit to Yantaganahalli Gram Panchayat in Nelamangala taluk of Bengaluru Rural district on Friday, locals complained that medical waste was being dumped into the village lake.

Responding to the complaint on Friday, the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister instructed taluk executive officers to lodge a police complaint against those responsible.

Khandre also directed officials to dispose of the pending 11B applications about gram panchayat property tax records within 15 days.

After inspecting the attendance register of panchayat officials and staff, Khandre told them to report to work on time, and avoid making villagers visit the panchayat office without valid reasons.

Responding to complaints about delays in issuing e-Swathu records, Khandre said technical issues, if any, should be brought to the notice of higher authorities.

He directed officials to issue e-Swathu certificates within the stipulated timeframe if documents were in order.

Later, he visited the Hanchipura purified drinking water unit. He directed officials to replace water purification membranes regularly.

Khandre visited an anganwadi centre and inspected the food being served. *—PTI*

City cop under scanner in ₹ 20L robbery case

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

A police inspector in Bengaluru is under investigation for his alleged involvement in a Rs 20 lakh robbery after a gang posing as police officers targeted two youths at a hotel in Madiwala, police said. The incident happened on Thursday when the youths, reportedly carrying Rs 20 lakh, were approached by individuals claiming to be police, who showed ID cards, questioned them about the money, and accused them of money trading.

The suspects demanded the money and fled in a jeep parked outside the hotel. The victims lodged a complaint after realising they had been duped. During investigation, one accused disclosed the involvement of an inspector and claimed the officer dropped them near the hotel and sat in the jeep during the incident. The CID-attached inspector has since gone into hiding.

"They were private individuals claiming to be police officers. We are investigating the involvement of an inspector as new information emerges," he said. *— PTI*

Overground stretch of Metro Pink Line to open by August

Bengaluru Minister Krishna Byre Gowda during a meeting with BMRCL officials, in Bengaluru, on Friday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

- Overground stretch: Kalena Agrahara (Bannerghatta Road)-Tavarekere (near Dairy Circle)
- Underground stretch: Tavarekere – Nagawara (near Manyata Tech Park)

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

During a review meeting on Friday, Minister Krishna Byre Gowda directed BMRCL to commission the Kalena Agrahara–Tavarekere section of the elevated Pink Line, comprising six stations and covering 7.5 km, by 15 August, 2026, subject to the completion of all statutory approvals and safety requirements.

The remaining 12 underground stations on the Pink Line are targeted for commissioning by March 2027, he said.

He also directed BMRCL to commence trial runs on the KR Pura–Marathahalli section of the Blue Line by October 2026. The Hebbal–Kempegowda International Airport section of the Blue Line, spanning approximately 26 km, is expected to open for public service by June 2027. The remaining KR Pura–Hebbal section of the Blue Line is likely to be commissioned by December 2027.

With the commissioning of the upcoming Pink Line and Blue Line sections, the Namma Metro network length is expected to increase to approximately 175 km from the current 96 km by March 2028.

Gowda directed BMRCL officials to accelerate the pace of construction and assured them of all support from the state government. He emphasised that timely completion and minimising inconvenience to citizens are vital, asking officials to ensure minimum disruption to traffic, proper waste management and effective drainage arrangements during the monsoon.

He added that Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has already taken up the matter of approval from the Centre for the Phase-3 Double-Decker Corridor Project. *—PTI*

Ex Kolar MLA Srinivasaiah dies at 94

KOLAR, 19 JUNE

Former Kolar MLA KR Srinivasaiah died at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Friday. He was 94. A native of Ekamballi village in Kolar taluk, Srinivasaiah was elected to the Karnataka Assembly on a Janata Party ticket in 1983 and 1985. A close associate of former Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, he had earlier served as president of the Kolar Taluk Board. An advocate by profession, Srinivasaiah began legal practice in 1955 after completing his law degree and served clients across Kolar and Chikkaballapura districts for decades. He also appeared as a Special Public Prosecutor in several criminal cases. He is survived by his wife and four sons. *—SALAR NEWS*

HOTELS MAY BE RAIDED TOO

Safety officers to check Mysuru roadside food

MYSURU, 19 JUNE

Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy on Friday said that food safety officers will conduct a one month special drive to check the quality of food served by roadside vendors in the city.

Chairing the meeting with Food Safety and Standard Authority of India FSSAI officials held at his office, he said that food safety officers have been instructed to file a case if they fail to serve quality food violating FSSAI norms.

He also gave directions to officials of Mysuru City Corporation , city municipal bodies on the city's outskirts to take part in the special drive along with FSSAI officials.

He asked officials to suspend the trade license, penalize,and file cases if vendors failed to comply with guidelines regarding food safety.

Directions have also been given to officials to raid hotels, including star hotels if they are found violating government guidelines.

He asked the food safety officers to strictly enforce hygiene protocols, mandate FSSAI registrations, curb the use of artificial colours, reusing cooking oil, and failing to adopt cleanliness. *— Salar News*

A row broke out in Bengaluru's Rajarajeshwari Nagar as GBA officials and cops evicted street vendors alleging they took up space on footpaths and streets *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

AMID SIR, CONG ASKS FOR RULES ON ELECTED OFFICIALS MEETING BLOS

BENGALURU, 19 JUNE

Congress MLC Ramesh Babu on Friday urged the Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka to issue directions on how elected officials – MPs, MLAs and MLCs – can meet Booth Level Officers (BLOs) during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the State to ensure transparency.

In the letter on behalf of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), Babu said elected officials regularly regularly receive complaints regarding voter registration, non-receipt of enumeration forms, omissions in electoral rolls and difficulties faced by citizens, and hence asked the Election Commission (EC) to set up "structure interactions" to allow the officials to take up such issues with BLOs.

"Such interaction would strengthen electoral inclusion and public confidence," Babu, who is also the KPCC Media & Communication Department Chairman, wrote. He stressed that BLOs must remain completely non-partisan so the interactions must "be confined to administrative and voter-service issues".

Babu also sought a grievance redressal mechanism through Electoral Registration Officers and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers.

The proposed measures, he said, he said, would strengthen public trust in the SIR process and help ensure that "no eligible voter is left out". *—Salar News*

Yadrami PSI and constable caught in Lokayukta sting

KALABURAGI, 19 JUNE

A Police Sub-Inspector and a constable attached to Yadrami Police Station were caught allegedly accepting a bribe during a Lokayukta raid on Thursday. The accused, PSI Vishwanath Mudareddi and Special Branch constable Siddanna Biradar, had allegedly demanded Rs 50,000 from rice trader Anand Kusti in connection with his business activities. The duo had already received Rs 20,000 through PhonePe on June 12. They were allegedly caught red-handed while accepting another Rs 20,000 inside the police station premises, officials said.

Ironically, Mudareddi had recently received the Chief Minister's Gold Medal for excellence in criminal investigation. The operation was led by Lokayukta SP Siddharaju. *— Salar News*

—ANI

SC dismisses TN's trust vote anomaly plea

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The Supreme Court dismissed a plea seeking a probe into alleged irregularities and horse-trading during the Tamil Nadu Assembly Trust vote on 13 May. The bench said the claims were "vague, wild and casual," and found no reliable supporting evidence. The petition, filed by KK Ramesh's advocate alleged that some MLAs were involved in horse-trading, with large sums of money handed over by the C Joseph Vijay-led TVK government. It called for a CBI probe and suggested President's Rule be imposed until investigations concluded. Despite TVK not securing an outright majority, Vijay gained support from Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI (M), and IUML, crossing the 118-seat threshold with 120 MLAs, dismissing claims of horse-trading. —*PTI*

Centre approves T'gana Gandhi Sarovar Project

HYDERABAD, 19 JUNE

The Congress government's plan to develop the Gandhi Sarovar Project at Bapu Ghat under its ambitious Musi river rejuvenation programme received a boost after defence authorities granted working permission. According to an order posted on the social medite platform 'X' by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, President Droupadi Murmu sanctioned permission to Musi Riverfront Development Corporation (MRDC) for the project. The approval covers 83.814 acres of defence land valued at over Rs 533 crore through Equal Value Infrastructure. Reddy thanked Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Indian Army, saying, "This approval marks an important milestone" in transforming the Musi riverfront into a public asset. —*PTI*

BJP leader's Punjabis remark triggers row

CHANDIGARH, 19 JUNE

A political row erupted after BJP Chandigarh unit president Jatinder Pal Malhotra allegedly made an "anti-Punjabi" remark, drawing criticism from the AAP, Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal. AAP workers protested outside the BJP office, raising slogans and burning an effigy. AAP leader Yogesh Dhingra said Malhotra's claim that Punjabis are "emotional bloody fools" insulted the community. Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring demanded an apology, saying, "Punjabis are emotional, but not fools." Malhotra denied targeting Punjabis, alleging the video was clipped, adding that "if anyone felt hurt by my comments, I feel sorry."—*PTI*

Dipke writes to PM, seeks ₹1 cr for kin of NEET suicide victims

Says banning Telegram is only bandaid fix

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Ahead of a proposed student protest at Jantar Mantar, Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Friday appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide Rs 1 crore compensation to families of students who allegedly died by suicide amid examination controversies and renewed his demand for the dismissal of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Dipke claimed 11 students had died by suicide in recent weeks, including five in the last 48 hours, as uncertainty over possible re-examinations continued to weigh heavily on students.

Arguing that many affected families had taken substantial educational loans, he sought immediate financial assistance, saying they had been left "entirely destitute" after losing their children.

The appeal comes ahead of CJP's second protest at Jantar Mantar on 20 June, where the organisation plans to intensify its campaign against alleged examination irregularities and paper leaks.

Dipke said removing the education minister would demonstrate the government's commitment to accountability. "The buck stops with the Prime Minister," he said, adding that students wanted accountability for the alleged loss of lives.

Speaking to reporters in Maharashtra's Hingoli district before leaving for Delhi, Dipke also criticised the Centre's decision to temporarily block Telegram ahead of the June 21 NEET re-test.

"Banning Telegram is like closing a road because there are potholes instead of repairing it. It makes no sense," he said.

Dipke added that any political leader concerned about students and paper leaks should come forward and support the movement. —*PTI*

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Friday appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding NEET students—*PTI*

- In a letter to the Prime Minister, Abhijeet Dipke claimed that 11 students had died by suicide in recent weeks, including five in the last 48 hours, as uncertainty over possible re-examinations continued to weigh heavily on students.

MEETS WITH SPEAKER

Abhishek submits 20 pleas to disqualify TMC rebels

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The crisis in the Trinamool Congress (TMC) deepened on Friday as party leader in the Lok Sabha Abhishek Banerjee moved the Speaker seeking disqualification of 20 rebel MPs, while senior leaders Jyoti Priya Mallick and Goutam Deb resigned from key party and civic posts.

Banerjee, accompanied by MPs Saugata Roy, Kalyan Banerjee, Mahua Moitra and Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien, met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and submitted 20 separate petitions against rebel MPs who have claimed to merge with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI).

"The Constitution is clear. If a member voluntarily gives up party membership, he or she stands disqualified," Banerjee said, arguing that the rebels' claim of a merger was invalid as the anti-defection law requires two-thirds of the entire party to merge, not just legislators.

He accused the rebels of switching sides to escape probes by agencies such as the ED and CBI, claiming he had "concrete proof". Banerjee said the Speaker had assured both sides would be heard before a decision.

Meanwhile, former minister Jyoti Priya Mallick resigned from all organisational posts citing deteriorating health, including kidney ailments and diabetes. The five-time MLA had recently been inducted into TMC's reconstituted working committee.

In another setback, senior north Bengal leader Goutam Deb resigned as mayor of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation, relinquishing his official vehicle and security.

The developments come amid growing unrest within the TMC following its electoral setbacks and the rebellion by 58 MLAs and 20 MPs, marking the deepest internal crisis in the party's 28-year history. —*PTI*

TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee along with Mahua Moitra and Kalyan Banerjee meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla regarding the split in the party, at the Parliament House complex in New Delhi, on Friday —*PTI*

Yoga Day participation not mandatory for public servants: Govt

The Calcutta High Court on Friday disposed of a petition by an employees' union questioning a West Bengal government order on participation in the International Yoga Day function, noting that the state clarified it is not mandatory.

Claiming a memo issued by West Bengal's chief secretary called for mandatory participation by all employees, the State Coordination Committee of West Bengal Government Employees, challenged his authority to issue the directive.

Disposing of the petition after receiving the government's stand from additional advocate general Billwadal Bhattacharya, the court noted that the chief secretary's order "is a general appeal to all public servants" and "not mandatory in nature," with "no punitive or coercive action" recommended in case of failure to follow the directive.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the main International Day of Yoga programme in Kolkata. —*PTI*

Satheesan unveils first UDF Budget with Mission Samudra

T'PURAM, 19 JUNE

Kerala Chief Minister **VD Satheesan** presented the UDF government's first Budget (2026-27) in the Assembly, unveiling a mix of fiscal reforms, infrastructure projects and welfare initiatives aimed at reviving the state's economy acknowledging the severe financial pressures facing the government.

The revised Budget, presented four months after the Left government tabled the Budget for the current financial year, reflects a Rs 20,500 crore shortfall in expected revenue compared with the estimates made in January 2026.

In the Budget, prepared against the backdrop of the White Paper released by his government, Satheesan, who also holds the Finance portfolio, said the state's accumulated liabilities, including those of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) and Kerala Social Security Pensions Limited, stand at Rs 87,012 crore.

The Budget also unveiled development initiatives. The centrepiece is Mission Samudra, a maritime development programme that seeks to transform Kerala into a global maritime hub in the next five years with an allocation of Rs 400 crore.

The Budget also touched upon one of the five key Indira Guarantees promised by the UDF by announcing that initial steps would be taken to implement the Oommen Chandy Health Insurance Scheme, which proposes free health insurance cover of up to Rs 25 lakh for every family.

The LDF, criticised the Budget, alleging that its claim of a severe financial crisis was contradicted by the allocations announced.

The BJP, meanwhile, alleged that the Budget was built on ambitious promises without a clear roadmap for implementation and resource mobilisation. — *PTI*

CPI(ML) seeks probe of 'cross-voting' in RS polls

RANCHI, 19 JUNE

The Jharkhand unit of CPI(ML) Liberation on Friday sought a probe into the alleged cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha elections that led to the defeat of Congress nominee Pranav Jha, deepening tensions within the ruling INDIA bloc.

In a letter to Chief Minister Hemant Soren, the party demanded a fair inquiry and action against Congress legislators allegedly involved in a "conspiracy" to defeat the alliance candidate.

"We have urged the chief minister to identify the Congress MLAs involved and take action against them," CPI(ML) Liberation state secretary Manoj Bhakt said.

The party alleged that some Congress leaders and ministers maintain close ties with forces promoting corporate interests over Jharkhand's "Jal, Jungle aur Jamin" (water, forests and land).

The controversy erupted after NDA-backed Independent candidate Parimal Nathwani won one of the two Rajya Sabha seats on Thursday, defeating Congress candidate Jha. JMM's Baidyanath Ram won the other seat.

The BJP-led NDA has 24 MLAs in the 81-member Assembly, four short of the 28 first-preference votes required to secure a Rajya Sabha seat, while the INDIA bloc, comprising the JMM and Congress among others, has 56 MLAs.

Meanwhile, the BJP claimed the Congress candidate's defeat had exposed widening rifts within the ruling alliance, alleging that INDIA was united only by a "common minimum programme of loot and corruption". —*PTI*

CPI(ML) Liberation General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya —*ANI*

Disagreement among rebel MPs for ministerial berth: Raut

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader **Sanjay Raut** on Friday claimed there was disagreement among the party's dissident Members of Parliament (MPs) over who among them would become a Union minister, and that a settlement was reached to provide Rs 25 crore to those who will not get the opportunity.

Sena (UBT) MPs Sanjay Dina Patil, Sanjay Deshmukh, Sanjay Jadhav, Bhausaheb Wakchaure, Nagesh Patil-Ashtikar and Omprakash Raje Nimbalkar are likely to join the ruling Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra DyCM Eknath Shinde. On Wednesday, Raut claimed that dissident MPs were offered Rs 50 crore to switch sides. Slamming Mumbai Northeast MP Sanjay Dina Patil, Raut said there was no reason for him to abandon the party.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray came down on the six rebel MPs, calling them "shameless, ungrateful and corrupt" betrayed those who helped them win in the 2024 LS polls. In a post on X, he said Maharashtra will not tolerate this filthy politics.

Party workers staged protests against the dissident MPs, indicating that their exit was just a matter of time.

Ambadas Danve, Sena (UBT) leader, accused the ruling BJP of orchestrating the defection to increase the National Democratic Alliance's parliamentary headcount and push through the controversial Delimitation Bill. —*PTI*

Maharashtra DyCM Eknath Shinde. On Wednesday, Raut claimed that dissident MPs were offered Rs 50 crore to switch sides. Slamming Mumbai Northeast MP Sanjay Dina Patil, Raut said there was no reason for him to abandon the party.

Great Nicobar env assessments not adequate: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday wrote to Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav over the Great Nicobar Island (GNI) project, flagging the issue of non-transparency and asserting that the environmental impact assessments of aspects of the venture are "demonstrably inadequate" and "woefully short of guidelines set by the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change."

The letters refer to the government's plan to build an international container transshipment port and a power plant under the GNI project.

The environmental clearance calls for conservation and mitigation plans to be submitted within 15 days after the clearance on 11 November, 2022, but these plans are not publicly available, said Ramesh.

He added that there are doubts about the adequacy of these plans, and that the updated Environment Management Plan based on existing studies is not publicly available either.

"Some of the mitigation plans, like the large-scale relocation of coral colonies, are clearly unrealistic," Ramesh argued.

"Serious questions on its environmental impact and concerns on its grave ecological consequences remain unanswered and unaddressed by your sadly evasive replies," Ramesh said.

Congress on Wednesday attacked the government over the project, saying the transshipment port on is a recipe for ecological havoc and would lead to large-scale destruction of coral colonies. —*PTI*

Attempts to sully Ayodhya: Yogi on Ram Temple row

AYODHYA, 19 JUNE

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath accused those attempting to defame Ayodhya and cast doubt on the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust's functioning, asserting that state government formed SIT would reveal the truth.

At the 88th birth anniversary event of trust president Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, the SIT continued investigating alleged donation misappropriation at Ram temple after Akhilesh Yadav said on 7 June that crores of rupees were missing.

Adityanath urged devotees to ignore the row, and emphasised patience, stating, "We waited 500 years for the temple. Can we not wait 15 days?" He added, "SIT will separate milk from water." —*PTI*

'NOT JUST RHETORIC'

Let Bihar colleges hold classes till 8pm: Samrat

PATNA, 19 JUNE

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary stressed the need to spruce up higher education and said colleges across the state should consider holding classes till 8pm.

He made the remarks on Thursday at the foundation day ceremony of a college.

The chief minister added, "Please do not think I am indulging in rhetoric. We intend to build a structure where this becomes possible. Our children travel to far-off places like Punjab and Maharashtra for higher education. We must strengthen our higher education system to ensure their needs are met on home soil".

The state's education infrastructure is inadequate for a population of 13 crore, but changes will be visible from July onwards, he said.

The CM said his government is setting up more than 200 colleges, besides open universities and deemed universities.

"I have told my officers that although the density of population in Bihar is high, paucity of land must not be seen as a roadblock for new universities," he said.

Referring to his predecessor Nitish Kumar, the Janata Dal (United) (JDU) president, who stepped down to enter Rajya Sabha, Choudhary stated, "We shall build on the strong foundation laid down by Nitish ji." Adding that "Bihar saw a 15-year-long gap before it could be brought back on the path to progress". —*PTI*

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary—*PTI*

- "Please do not think I am indulging in rhetoric. We intend to build a structure where this becomes possible. Our children travel from places like Punjab and Maharashtra for higher education. We must strengthen our system to ensure their needs are met," said Bihar CM.

Hindus hurt: BJP on RaGa's Lord Parshuram poster

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

A political row erupted on Friday after Youth Congress workers in Varanasi portrayed Rahul Gandhi as Lord Parshuram while celebrating the Congress leader's 56th birthday.

The image showed the Leader of Opposition holding an axe in one hand and a copy of the Constitution in the other, while party workers performed symbolic rituals, including pouring milk over his photograph in the Ganga (in pic).

The BJP accused the Congress of insulting Hindu faith. Party spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said portraying Gandhi as Lord Parshuram, considered an avatar of Lord Vishnu, was "blasphemous" and demanded an apology.

"Insulting Hindu faith is the only identity of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress," Poonawalla alleged, accusing the party of repeatedly hurting Hindu sentiments for vote-bank politics.

BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari also criticised the move, saying Congress remembers Hindus "for one day" with appeasement politics the rest of the year.

The Congress hit back, asking whether the BJP had a "patent" on Lord Parshuram. Party leader Kanhaiya Kumar said Gandhi had his own identity and that he personally would prefer him to remain just Rahul Gandhi.

"Does the BJP have a patent on Lord Parshuram or Lord Ram?" Kumar asked, adding that the BJP should first answer allegations regarding donations meant for the Ram temple instead of raising "irrelevant matters". —*PTI*

Odisha's horseshoe crab may become extinct: Scientist

KENDRAPARA, 19 JUNE

A former CSIR scientist has warned that Odisha's horseshoe crab population could vanish within eight to ten years unless urgent conservation measures are taken. Anil Chatterji, ahead of International Horseshoe Crab Day on June 20, stated the species, called a "living fossil" surviving over 450 million years, faces threats from habitat degradation and human activities. He highlighted that research began in 1986, with a key discovery in 1987 at Balramgari, marking India's organised study start. Long-term data shows a 73 per cent population decline due to habitat destruction, pollution, and fishing. Chatterji urged community-based conservation, habitat protection, and scientific monitoring to save the species, emphasising its ecological and biomedical importance. —*PTI*

Malaysia deports Khalistanis who attacked railways

CHANDIGARH, 19 JUNE

Punjab Police have deported two wanted Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) operatives, Gurwinder Singh and Manjeet Singh, from Malaysia, and apprehended them at Delhi airport. The duo, linked to a terror module targeting railway infrastructure, including the Dedicated Freight Corridor, was brought to Delhi on Wednesday. Punjab Police, with central agencies and Malaysian police cooperation, conducted the operation. DGP Gaurav Yadav said the accused were involved in channelling terror funds and planning attacks to disrupt law and order in Punjab. They appeared before a Patiala court on 18 June and are in police custody for further investigation. —*PTI*

—ANI

BAI moves HC against judges' London trip news

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The Badminton Association of India on Friday moved the Delhi High Court seeking directions to remove the "false" information being circulated, claiming that several Indian judges and Union ministers participated in a government-sponsored badminton tournament in London earlier this month at taxpayers' expense. The association's counsel said the viral information was bringing a bad name to the sport. Its petition sought the immediate removal of these "malicious posts" from all social media and news platforms. The matter was mentioned for urgent listing before ustice Tejas Karia. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, on receiving advance notice of the PIL, also requested the court for an urgent hearing.—*PTI*

Delhi opens first women only police station

DELHI, 19 JUNE

The city's first women-only police station was inaugurated at Subzi Mandi, North Delhi, aimed at strengthening women's safety. Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, with Police Commissioner Satish Golchha, opened the station, which will handle crimes against women including domestic violence, harassment, stalking, and assault. All staff are women, making it the first fully women-staffed police station in Delhi. Sandhu stated that similar facilities will be created in other districts. The station will also conduct awareness programmes, counselling, and outreach to promote women's rights and legal remedies. From Saturday onwards, senior officers will hear public grievances through the 'Jan Sunwai' programme.—*PTI*

Safe footpath a fundamental right: SC

Footpaths meant only for pedestrians, affirms Supreme Court in landmark judgement

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The right to walk on a demarcated footpath is a fundamental right, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday.

The SC held that this right shall have priority over motorised vehicles on demarcated paths and it forms part of the right to movement guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (d) and other fundamental rights including Article 21 (right to life and liberty).

Justices PS Narasimha and AS Chandurkar held that a citizen's fundamental right to walk on a demarcated footpath is basic and shall have priority over movement of vehicles.

The SC order came in an accident case in which a father lost his 5-yr-old son while taking him to school—*SCREENGRAB*

The SC declaration came in the context of an accident compensation case where a father lost his five-year-old son while taking him to school.

The SC held that the fundamental right to walk on demarcated footpaths has a correlative duty and "If the road exists, there is a duty to ensure that there are demarcated and well-maintained footpaths for pedestrians."

The bench said that urban authorities, municipal corporations, municipalities and panchayats, must endeavour to demarcate, construct, maintain and safeguard footpaths and other pedestrian infrastructure.

It directed the registry to send the judgement to Central ministries and the law commission for initiating the necessary legal framework.

The SC said human beings started walking long before wheels were put on the path and the primary right of movement under Article 19(1)(d) is the Fundamental Right to Walk, a right that precedes the right to move on wheels.

The Supreme Court enhanced the motor accident claim compensation to Rs 11,44,628 payable to the father of the dead child within two months and set aside the HC order reducing it. — *PTI*

SC FLAGS 'BRAIN DRAIN' IN LAW, MOOTS 'HELP FUND' FOR LAWYERS

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Noting that bright advocates are deserting the profession due to financial problems, the Supreme Court on Friday said a "Young Lawyers' Professional Assistance Fund" must be created to stop the "brain drain."

The SC also took note of the problems faced by women lawyers and said when they are required to spend substantial portions of their day on court premises, availability of basic infrastructure necessary for their comfort, privacy, safety and professional functioning assumes utmost significance.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana issued notice to the Centre, all states and UTs and others seeking their responses on a plea which highlighted the financial challenges faced by young lawyers.

The plea filed by a group of women advocates also raised issue concerning the accessibility, inclusiveness and long-term sustainability of women lawyers in the profession.

"All stakeholders must consider the desirability of enacting a law providing for contribution by successful senior advocates and other lawyers," it said. The bench said in addition, the Centre and states ought to contribute a part of the court fee collected by the judiciary towards that fund.

It posted the matter for hearing on 17 July. — PTI

DIPLOMATIC ROW

India calls Pak 'Frankenstein state' at UN

UNITED NATIONS, 19 JUNE

India has slammed Pakistan at the United Nations, calling it a "Frankenstein state" that gets shocked when its "own monster bites back", as it accused Islamabad of "hosting, training and deploying" terrorists.

The remarks were made by Anupama Singh, First Secretary at India's Permanent Mission to the UN, on Wednesday, after Pakistan and the OIC raised the J&K issue during the Interactive Dialogue on the UN High Commissioner's annual report.

She also said that Pakistan is a country whose defence minister "boasts of hosting, training and deploying terrorists."

Singh also mentioned the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, calling it "outdated."

- India's UN envoy Anupama Singh said that Pakistan is a country whose defence minister "boasts of training and deploying terrorists." She also said the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan signed in 1960 was "outdated"

PAK RAISES INDUS ISSUE

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar urged the UN Security Council to take notice of India's alleged violations of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said that he delivered a letter from Dar to UNSC president Leonor Zalabata Torres to highlight Islamabad's concerns. — *PTI*

NTA issues safety advisory; shares admit card updates

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The NTA said that it is sending reminder SMS messages, emails, and WhatsApp notifications to candidates, urging them to download their admit cards for the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination scheduled for 21 June, and cautioned students against fraudulent messages.

The agency informed that legitimate SMS messages would be sent from the official sender ID "NICPEP," and emails would originate from "no-reply.neet.nta@nic.in." It also reiterated that the official website for this process is http://neet.nta.nic.in; candidates are encouraged to enter this URL directly into their browsers.

"NTA will NEVER ask for any payment, send exam papers, answer keys, or 'leaked' material, or share your admit card via a link," the advisory said, adding, "If you receive any such message, do not click. Report it."

The NTA said that it would now send exam updates and centre information to candidates directly via WhatsApp.

Candidates should ensure that they see the blue verified tick and the name 'National Testing Agency' next to the sender; any message from an account without the blue tick is NOT from the NTA, even if it appears to use their name. The NTA clarified that the WhatsApp service is a "broadcast-only channel" and that it "will not ask you to reply, share OTPs/details, or pay."

Candidates who have already downloaded their admit cards for the 21 June re-examination need not download them again.

The NTA said the admit cards issued for the 3 May exam are no longer valid.

NO LEAVE FOR MEDICOS

The National Medical Commission has directed all medical colleges and institutions under its purview not to grant leave to students on 20 and 21 June to ensure the fair conduct of the NEET-UG re-exam on Sunday.

The move comes in the backdrop of some students of medical colleges getting involved in activities that could compromise the integrity of the medical entrance examination. —*PTI*

The NTA said that it would now send exam updates and centre information to candidates directly via WhatsApp—*PTI*

SC refuses urgent hearing on NEET

The SC refused to permit urgent hearing of two pleas connected to the NEET-UG 2026 re-test.

CJI Kant and Justice V Mohana said the petitions would be heard by Justice PS Narasimha in July.

Advocate Adeel Ahmed had mentioned a separate petition filed by NEET-UG aspirants.

It said the grievance of the petitioners was confined to the "arbitrary fixation" of the re-test date. —*PTI*

NEET candidate ends life in Lucknow

LUCKNOW, 19 JUNE

A 17-year-old NEET candidate allegedly ended her life here, police said on Friday. The deceased, Suhani Yadav, died Tuesday.

The girl was found hanging from a fan in her house, the SHO of Bazar Khala Police Station Brijesh Singh said, adding that no suicide note was recovered. Suhani's family told the police that she had did well in the 3 May NEET-UG test However, after its cancellation she had become depressed. — PTI

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Lightning hits Indigo jet in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 19 JUNE

An IndiGo aircraft bound for Agartala was struck by lightning while on stand at the Kolkata airport on Friday during a thunderstorm, an Airports Authority of India (AAI) official said. The incident occurred amid prevailing thunderstorm and rain conditions, for which the Airport Operations Control Centre (AOCC) had issued weather alerts. No passengers were injured in the incident, he added.

The aircraft, IndiGo flight 6E6068 (VT-IPW), was on stand at aerobridge 56L when the lightning strike took place. The airline deboarded the passengers, who later departed on another aircraft (VT-ICD), the official said.

IndiGo said two ground personnel were slightly "affected" and were taken to a hospital. However, they were later declared "normal", he added. —*PTI*

BEST strike hits Mumbai life

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

The indefinite strike by BEST employees has severely impacted Mumbai's public transport, with only 32 of the 2,766 buses operational during the morning peak, a BEST spokesperson said. The official added that 38 buses left depots, but six had to return after incidents of stone-pelting and obstruction by striking workers. Thousands of commuters faced long queues and relied on alternative modes like trains, Metro, autorickshaws, taxis, and app-based cabs, causing delays in workplaces and schools.

"I travel to work by public transport, but today I took my bike out as there were no buses," said Sachin Nalawade, a consultant. The strike, launched after Thursday midnight, is organised by the BEST Sanyukt Kamgar Kruti Samiti, comprising 12 unions. BEST Chairman Vishwasrao urged employees "not to hold the city to ransom and return to work."

Key demands include merging BEST's budget with the BMC, settling legal dues of retired employees, implementing the Seventh Pay Commission (2016-2026), abolishing contractual arrangements, and absorbing wet-lease bus workers. — *PTI*

Goa has only one month's drinking water supply

PANAJI, 19 JUNE

Goa's stock of drinking water can last about a month, the government said, as the state is witnessing a lull in rainfall.

Water Supply Department Minister Subhash Phal Desai told PTI on Thursday that the water level in reservoirs has dropped drastically.

"But there is no need to panic. There is enough water to fulfil the requirement for a month," he said, adding that the state government will issue strict advisories to ensure that the existing water is not exhausted before that.

He said that he has been receiving calls from various sections, including industries, inquiring about the condition of water supply.

Phal Desai said his department will hold a meeting with Minister for Water Resources Subhash Shirodkar to "evaluate the data of water available in various dams across the state."

The minister said the Selaulim dam, which supplies water to the entire South Goa, Kushavati district and parts of North Goa, is 27 per cent full. It has a drawing capacity of 280 MLD (million litres per day).

The IMD has predicted that rainfall will resume in the state by next weekend.

Meanwhile, the Maharashtra governmment said that they have only 40 days of drinking water supply left. — *PTI*

Murder case booked against Vijayawada cop for custody death

VIJAYAWADA, 19 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh Police on Friday booked a murder case, among other charges, against one of its officials, inspector Nagaraju, for his alleged role in a man "missing" case in Vijayawada after the victim's mother claimed that the inspector had tortured and killed her son while in custody.

Recently, the Andhra Pradesh government "suspended" Nagaraju, attached to Vijayawada's Krishna Lanka station, for his alleged role in the disappearance of Gade Sai Krishna, 23.

Krishna's mother Gade Vijaya Lakshmi, 53, lodged a complaint against Nagaraju on Thursday evening and the police registered the FIR today.

Lakshmi accused Nagaraju of confining her son in the police station, torturing him to death and later cremating him clandestinely.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu appointed a senior IPS officer to probe the case.

Meanwhile, a viral video emerged featuring a Dalit man, Perupogu Kranthi Kumar, who had accused inspector Nagaraju of driving him to suicide through his alleged harassment and torture. —*PTI*

RELOCATION DRIVE

700 Delhi slum families living in fear of demolition

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Hundreds of residents in BR camp jhuggis around the Jaipur Polo Ground and Race Course area are living in fear of losing their homes after authorities marked structures and carried out demolition-related activities, residents said on Friday.

Authorities said they are taking this action in compliance with a Delhi High Court order.

The slum dwellers, comprising over 700-odd families, appealed against a single judge's order of 11 May.

They pointed out that relocating them about 45 kilometres away to Savda Ghevra will deprive them of their livelihoods, as most currently hold blue-collar jobs near the Prime Minister's residence, close to their current camps.

The slum dwellers said that relocating them to Savda Ghevra, around about 45 km away, will deprive them of their livelihoods—*PTI*

The Thursday demolition activities triggered anxiety among families still living in the settlement.

Many of these families have started removing doors, windows, tin sheets and other belongings from their homes anticipating demolition.

"We have been here since the British era, and now the authorities are asking us to leave. Our families lived here for generations. People were born here, and died here," said resident Shaan Khan.

"Many families have already left. House locks are being broken to check whether anyone is still inside. Once the houses are found vacant, the structures are demolished by the authorities," he said.

Khan claimed that around 300 families have already shifted to Savda Ghevra, and only families involved in a court petition are staying in the camp.

Residents said the eviction drive is part of a relocation exercise and that they have been fighting it in court since March. — *PTI*

WB DRENCHED

Heavy overnight monsoon rains inundated large parts of north and south Bengal on Friday, disrupting normal life and causing traffic snarls in Kolkata and adjoining districts. Rivers, including the Teesta and Balason, flowed close to danger levels following torrential rainfall in neighbouring Bhutan and Sikkim. Multiple landslides in the Darjeeling hills cut off connectivity along NH-110, while a temporary bridge over the swollen Balason river collapsed, disrupting movement between Siliguri and Mirik. The IMD issued red and orange alerts for several districts, warning of more heavy rainfall over the next few days —PTI

SHIV SENA TURNS 60

Uddhav faces crisis, Shinde battles for relevance

As both factions of the Shiv Sena celebrate 60 years on Friday, the one led by Uddhav Thackeray is facing an existential crisis, while the other, under Eknath Shinde, is battling for relevance in the era of a hegemonic BJP, according to political experts.

The undivided Shiv Sena, once a steadfast ally of the BJP for 25 years, was virtually an "elder brother" in the coalition in Maharashtra, but the power dynamics have changed since 2014, after Narendra Modi took charge as the Prime Minister.

The alliance between the two parties broke just before the 2014 assembly polls. The two came together in less than four months, but the relations were never warm again, always simmering, waiting to explode.

The scene repeated itself in 2019 when the Shiv Sena walked out of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance over the chief minister's post. The break-up later unleashed forces that divided the party into two factions.

It is not that the Shiv Sena was new to revolts. Right from stalwarts like Chhagan Bhujbal to Ganesh Naik to Narayan Rane to Raj Thackeray, it had faced many rebellions, but none matched the one led by Shinde in 2022 that split the Shiv Sena.

Shinde, who rose from the ranks of the Shiv Sena, had then walked away with 39 MLAs and 13 MPs. Subsequently, his group got the party's name and its bow-and-arrow symbol as well.

The Shiv Sena was formed in 1966 by firebrand orator Bal Keshav Thackeray, popularly known as Balasaheb, a cartoonist and son of social reformer Keshav (Prabhodhankar) Thackeray, who championed the cause of the 'Marathi manoos', or the Marathi-speaking population of Maharashtra.

Bal Thackeray made the Shiv Sena a force to reckon with in Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai, with Shiv Sainiks earning a reputation as street-level activists who fiercely championed the party's causes.

Political analyst said both factions headed by Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde confront a tougher challenge than Bal Thackeray faced in his lifetime —PTI

In these 60 years, the undivided Shiv Sena had three chief ministers -- Manohar Joshi, Narayan Rane and Uddhav Thackeray. However, none of them could get an entire five-year tenure. Post the split in 2022, Shinde helmed the government for two and a half years.

Political analyst Hemant Desai said both factions, especially the Shiv Sena (UBT), headed by Uddhav Thackeray, confront a tougher challenge than Bal Thackeray faced in his lifetime.

However, the Uddhav Thackeray-led group is staring at a much bigger crisis, Desai said.

With only 20 MLAs, the Shiv Sena (UBT) may be the biggest party in the Opposition camp in the assembly, but the Shinde-led Sena has nearly three times as many legislators in the House.

The undivided Shiv Sena helmed by Thackeray controlled the cash-rich Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for 25 years, from 1997 to 2022. The party's hold over the civic body ended in 2022. In the next civic elections conducted in 2026, BJP installed its mayor in the corporation.

Desai also said that there is a silver lining in the crisis faced by the Uddhav-led faction. It can start afresh, though that would require tremendous efforts, especially from Uddhav's son and heir apparent Aaditya Thackeray.

Shinde has been in power since 2014, first in the Devendra Fadnavis government and then in the Uddhav Thackeray-led government, later as chief minister from 2022 to 2024, and as deputy chief minister since 2024.

For the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, the challenge will begin once there tightening of noose over finance, Desai said.

Political analyst Sanjay Kumar, a professor at the Delhi-based Centre for Developing Studies and Societies, said the relevance of the two Sena factions needs to be viewed from the context of regional parties, especially in those where the power transfer can take place within the first family. Data indicates that the relevance of both factions has reduced in terms of vote share.

Referring to the split in the undivided Shiv Sena headed by Thackeray, Kumar said his group is staring at another split and did not seem to take its cue from the Trinamool Congress, whose Lok Sabha MPs formed a separate group and later merged with the Nationalist Congress Party of India (NCPI).

"Uddhav faction is more prone to getting into deeper trouble as it is not in power," Kumar said.

Kumar said the Sena (UBT) not only faces issues with leadership, but also an ideological crisis as the BJP has "snatched" its Hindutva plank.

The Shinde-led Shiv Sena is likely to remain relevant for some time as the BJP still does not command a complete majority in the state elections, he said.

"Slowly and gradually, the Shinde-led Sena is moving towards losing relevance just like the JD(U) in Bihar," Kumar added. —PTI

SALAR سالار

Why Imam Hussain & Karbala still inspire the world

HAJI SYED SALMAN CHISHTY

People take part in procession on the second day of Muharram in Lucknow on Thursday –PTI

"Shah ast Hussain, Badshah ast Hussain Deen ast Hussain, Deen Panah ast Hussain."

These immortal lines of the great Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer capture the essence of Imam Hussain — the King of Martyrs, the guardian of faith and an eternal symbol of truth and sacrifice.

On the 10th day of Muharram in 61 AH (680 AD), Imam Hussain ibn Ali, the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), was martyred on the plains of Karbala by the forces of the Umayyad ruler Yazid. More than thirteen centuries later, the tragedy continues to resonate deeply across the world, inspiring millions with its message of courage, justice and resistance against tyranny.

This year, Ashura is expected to be observed on June 26, 2026, with Ajmer Sharif once again preparing to welcome a sea of devotees who gather to remember the supreme sacrifice of Imam Hussain.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) cherished his grandson dearly. Tradition recounts that during congregational prayer, young Hussain once climbed onto the Prophet's back while he was in prostration. The Prophet remained in that position until the child descended of his own accord. On another occasion, hearing Hussain cry at the home of his daughter Fatima, the Prophet said: "Do you not know that it pains me to hear Hussain cry?"

In one of the most celebrated Hadiths, the Prophet declared: "Hussain is from me and I am from Hussain." The saying underlines the inseparable bond between the Prophet and his grandson, whose life embodied the same values of truth, compassion and unwavering faith.

Imam Hussain inherited wisdom, courage and nobility from his father, Ali ibn Abi Talib. But it was at Karbala that these virtues found their highest expression. Refusing to pledge allegiance to Yazid, whose rule he considered unjust and contrary to Islamic principles, Hussain chose the path of sacrifice over compromise.

His stand was not for worldly power. Rather, it was to preserve Islam's moral foundations — truth over falsehood, justice over oppression and conscience over tyranny. In doing so, he demonstrated that righteousness does not depend on numbers, but on the conviction of those willing to uphold it.

The message of Karbala remains profoundly relevant. Islam emerged in an age marked by oppression, tribal divisions and inequality. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) challenged these injustices and established principles of equality, justice and accountability. Imam Hussain carried forward this legacy, teaching humanity to stand with Haqq (truth) and reject Batil (falsehood), regardless of the consequences.

His martyrdom transformed Karbala into a universal symbol of resistance. Mahatma Gandhi famously acknowledged this legacy, saying: "I learnt from Hussain how to be oppressed yet victorious."Muharram observances in South Asia, particularly in India, reflect this universal appeal. The ceremonies are marked not only by Muslims but also by people of other faiths who participate with reverence and devotion.

In cities such as Varanasi, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and Ajmer, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Christians often join Muharram processions and congregations. Many Hindu families take part in preparing Taziyas — replicas of Imam Hussain's mausoleum in Karbala — as a gesture of respect for his sacrifice.

Among the most remarkable examples of this shared heritage are the Hussaini Brahmins, primarily found in Punjab. According to tradition, their ancestor Rahab Dutt travelled to Arabia and fought alongside Imam Hussain at Karbala. Several of his sons were martyred in battle. This association forged a lasting spiritual bond, and the community continues to honour Imam Hussain as an exemplar of courage and righteousness.

The ideals of Karbala have also inspired India's freedom struggle. Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi is remembered as a devotee of Imam Hussain who chose sacrifice over submission during the Revolt of 1857. Generations of poets across faiths have similarly paid tribute to the martyr of Karbala.

The celebrated poet-philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal wrote that Imam Hussain "uprooted despotism forever" and revived the spirit of freedom through his sacrifice. Urdu elegies by Mir Anis and countless other poets continue to keep alive the memory of Karbala in the hearts of millions. The tragedy of Karbala took place on the banks of the Euphrates in present-day Iraq, but its message transcends geography, religion and time. Imam Hussain's stand reminds humanity that truth often demands sacrifice, and that justice must be defended even in the face of overwhelming odds.

As Muharram is observed once again, the legacy of Imam Hussain endures — not merely as a chapter in Islamic history, but as a timeless call to uphold truth, resist oppression and strive for a more just and compassionate world.

The author's views are personal

Haji Syed Salman Chishty is the 26th-generation Gaddi Nashin (Hereditary Custodian and Key Holder) of the Dargah Ajmer Sharif in Rajasthan, India. He also serves as the Chairman of the Chishty Foundation, an organisation he co-founded to promote Sufi principles

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Govt troops behind most abuses against 25,000 children in war zones

Nearly 25,000 children caught up in armed conflicts around the world were victims of a record number of grave violations last year, including killings, rape, abduction and forced recruitment, according to a new United Nations report that paints a bleak picture of the state of the world's children.

At the same time, the UN's food agencies have warned that acute hunger is set to worsen across 13 global hotspots in the coming months, with conflict, funding shortages and climate shocks pushing millions closer to famine.

The findings, contained in two separate UN reports released this week, underscore the devastating human cost of wars that are increasingly being fought in populated areas, leaving children among the worst affected.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' annual report on children and armed conflict documented 38,558 grave violations against children in 2025, the fourth consecutive yearly increase and the highest figure since the UN began monitoring such abuses three decades ago.

The violations affected 24,174 children, about a third of them girls, with many suffering multiple forms of abuse.

For the first time since UN monitoring began 30 years ago, government forces, rather than armed groups, were responsible for the majority of the violations.

The UN blacklist of perpetrators includes government forces from eight countries and 67 armed groups operating across 16 countries and territories.

The Israeli military and security forces topped the list with 12,445 verified violations. Congo followed with 4,114 violations, while Myanmar, Somalia and armed groups in Nigeria each recorded more than 2,000 violations. Government forces from Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Russia's armed forces in Ukraine were also named.

The report found that government forces were the principal perpetrators of the 6,266 killings of children recorded last year, a 34 per cent increase over the previous year, as well as 7,958 injuries.

The UN verified the deaths of 2,668 Palestinian children in Gaza and another 55 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem attributed to Israeli forces. It is also in the process of verifying reports of an additional 4,588 child deaths in Gaza. Meanwhile, 346 Israeli children were reported injured.

Guterres said he was "appalled by the magnitude of grave violations against children" in the Palestinian territories and Israel and expressed alarm over what he described as a "staggering increase" in violations committed by Israeli forces.

The Israeli military and security forces topped the list with 12,445 war crimes against children. The UN verified the deaths of 2,668 Palestinian children in Gaza and another 55 in the West Bank by Israeli forces –UN

He urged Israel to work with the UN on a time-bound action plan to end the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Vanessa Frazier said the rise in violations reflected growing disregard for international law and changes in the nature of warfare.

"Children were impacted while escaping fighting, seeking food, water or medical care, and navigating areas heavily contaminated by explosive remnants of war, often contributing to lifelong disabilities," she said.

The report also verified the recruitment and use of 6,607 children in armed conflicts, with the highest numbers recorded in Congo, Nigeria, Haiti, Somalia and Colombia.

Another 5,129 children were abducted, mainly in Nigeria, Congo, Somalia, Myanmar and Mozambique, while 1,783 children were victims of rape and sexual violence, particularly in Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and Haiti.

Conflict is also driving a worsening hunger crisis across large parts of the world.

In a separate report, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) warned that acute food insecurity is expected to worsen between June and November 2026 across 13 hotspots, with around 266 million people already facing high levels of hunger.

"The warnings in this report cannot be ignored," WFP Acting Executive Director Carl Skau said.

"Without action now, millions more are expected to face worsening levels of hunger in the months ahead, pushing some closer to famine."

Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen and the Gaza Strip remain the areas of greatest concern. Nigeria and Somalia have now joined that list as conditions deteriorate and famine risks rise.

Seven other countries are also classified as hotspots: Afghanistan, Congo, Myanmar, Haiti, Mali, Lebanon and Madagascar.

The agencies identified conflict and violence as the primary drivers of hunger in nearly all the hotspots. Economic shocks, cuts in humanitarian funding and the expected effects of an El Niño weather pattern, likely to bring droughts and floods, are further worsening the situation.

Additional pressures, including spillover from the conflict in the Middle East and an Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo, are disrupting markets, livelihoods and aid access.

Humanitarian funding has declined sharply. The report noted that financing for food assistance and related programmes has fallen by around 59 per cent since 2022, even as needs have surged.

For years, the US Agency for International Development was the backbone of global humanitarian assistance, but the Trump administration abolished the agency last year, cutting USD 60 billion in overall aid. Funding to WFP was restored in December and Washington has since announced a further USD 218 million in assistance to UNICEF. —*Salar News*

— SCREENGRAB

Seven killed in Myanmar military airstrike in Rakhine

YANGON, 19 JUNE

An airstrike by Myanmar's military has killed seven civilians, including a five-year-old child, in the conflict-torn western region of Rakhine, a witness and rescue worker said Thursday. Civil war erupted in Myanmar in 2021 after the military staged a coup, ending a decade of democracy and ousting Aung San Suu Kyi's government. The military's air force, equipped with Chinese and Russian jets, has targeted pro-democracy fighters and ethnic armies, but rights groups say civilians are often caught in the crossfire. Naing Win Lwin, a rescue worker, said around 3.00pm on Wednesday, jets dropped nine bombs in Kyauktaw. He reported seven fatalities and 15 wounded. Ethnic groups like the Arakan Army are active in Rakhine. —*AGENCIES*

Argentina football fans injured in Kansas shooting

KANSAS CITY, 19 JUNE

An Uber driver transporting Argentina fans was shot during a series of shootings in Kansas City, Missouri, leaving four injured and one dead. The suspect, armed and dangerous, remains at large. The five shootings took place Tuesday between 6 pm and 6:30 pm over a five-mile area, including Interstates 70 and 670, away from the stadium where Argentina played. The Uber driver was hit in the leg; injuries are non-life-threatening. Three adults and a minor were hospitalized, with one adult's injuries serious. Police responded to a vehicle crash on Truman Road, where a gunshot wound was found, and later tracked the suspect to a nearby home in Independence, where a standoff ensued.—*PTI*

US military bombs alleged drug boat, kills three in Pacific

WASHINGTON, 19 JUNE

The US military targeted a boat accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific, killing three people. Since September, at least 211 have been killed in US boat strikes against traffickers, as the Trump administration's campaign continues. US Southern Command said it targeted traffickers along known routes but did not provide evidence the vessel carried drugs. A video showed the boat speeding before being hit and igniting. President Trump claimed the US is "in armed conflict" with Latin American cartels, justifying the attacks to curb drug flow and overdoses. Critics question the legality and effectiveness, noting fentanyl is trafficked over land from Mexico. Senators demanded unedited strike videos amid scrutiny of military legality.—*PTI*

Zimbabwe extends President's term limit

HARARE, 19 JUNE

Zimbabwe MPs approved amendments to extend President Mnangagwa's term from five to seven years and defer elections to 2030. The legislation also shifts presidential election selection from direct vote to lawmaker choice, pending Senate approval. Mnangagwa, aged 83, came to power in 2017 after Mugabe's ouster. He is among many African leaders with long tenures; recent analysis shows 16 of 186 leaders are older than US President Trump at 80. Africa's aging rulers include Cameroon's Biya, 93, and Equatorial Guinea's Obiang, 84. While some countries uphold term limits, others circumvent or abolish them. Young leaders like Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed, 49, contrast with the continent's long-serving old guard. —*PTI*

ALL OF LEBANON MUST BURN: ISRAEL

Trump says he can restrain Bibi, as Iran says Israel seeks a permanent war and derail peace

BEIRUT/TEL AVIV/ WASHINGTON, 19 JUNE

Hours before Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire, Israel's National Security Advisor Itamar Ben-Gvir stated that "all of Lebanon must burn" in response to four IDF soldiers being killed in the fighting. The ceasefire, international and Lebanese media reported, was in "name only" as strikes continued across Lebanon on Friday.

The strikes and Ben-Gvir's fiery statement threaten to derail the recently signed Iran-US deal. The deal, which was signed on Thursday by the leaders of both countries explicitly states calls for an end to fighting on all fronts "including in Lebanon". When Israel attacked Beirut's suburbs earlier, Iran quickly responded by launching strikes at it, threatening to derail the peace at the time.

"With all due respect to the Americans, Israel must make it clear to the entire world that the blood of our sons and the security of our citizens are not forfeit," Ben-Gvir's statement on X added, as he demanded that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pressed forward in the offensive.

"This is not a rant by a random genocidal lunatic. It's a public post by the national security minister of the Israeli regime," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi responded on X. "The genocidal death cult headquartered in Tel Aviv is a threat to all of humanity. It threatens all humans. Its only interest is permanent war."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei underscored the United States' direct responsibility under the current circumstances. He warned of the "continued warmongering", noting that peace in Lebanon was underscored in the very first point of the deal. "Iran will take all necessary measures to safeguard its interests, security, and rights, as well as those of its allies."

Netanyahu, meanwhile, said that the IDF struck 150 Hezbollah targets and killed dozens of "Hezbollah terrorists". He said that the Israeli army would continue to occupy vast portions of southern Lebanon – about 10 per cent of the country's population. The ceasefire appeared to have had little impact.

US President Donald Trump said in an interview to Axios on Friday that "we have to keep Netanyahu a little bit sane" on Lebanon. The Republican believed he had the power to keep Israel's longest serving Prime Minister in check. He said that Netanyahu would admit that the US is the one with the guns, describing their relationship as "good".

"If it weren't for Donald Trump, Israel would have been eviscerated," he added. —*Salar News*

A resident walks past the rubble of buildings damaged in Israeli strikes as a barber searches for belongings from his barbershop in the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanon, on Friday —*PTI*

The US is committed to peace, and we encourage everyone in the Middle East to maintain their commitment to allowing our negotiations to beautifully unfold. The markets are loving what is happening with oil prices way down, and stocks way up. We expect a complete ceasefire on all fronts, including Lebanon, Hezbollah, and Israel.

-Donald Trump, US President

Don takes last ride on Air Force One as Qatar jet set to join fleet

Trump's return from a visit to France on board Air Force One marked the final journey of the Boeing 747-200B, which has been ferrying US Presidents for the past 35 years. The US Air Force announced last month that a Boeing 747 gifted by Qatar to Trump had completed modification and flight testing. Trump is now reportedly considering taking the inaugural flight of the Qatari jet when he travels to Mount Rushmore next month as part of celebrations for America's 250th anniversary. The Air Force will refer to the Qatari plane as VC-25B.

AIPAC questions Iran deal, says it must reflect Trump's goals

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) raised questions over the US-Iran deal saying that any final agreement must align with Trump's stated objectives in the conflict. These include: "Obliterate Iran's ballistic missile arsenal and production capability, annihilate its navy, sever its support for terrorist proxies, and ensure the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism never acquires a nuclear weapon." AIPAC is one of the most powerful PACs in the

Do you know what really hurts the jihadists? They don't care if you kill them. What really hurts them is when you take territory from them and destroy their homes. The entire first line of Lebanese villages has been destroyed. We are destroying all the houses. The residents will never see them standing before their eyes again. The 2,00,000 residents who lived in the "security zone" (south Lebanon) are not returning

-Israel Katz, Israeli Defence Minister

For every tear of an Israeli mother sheds, a thousand Lebanese mothers must weep.. Enough with the ping-pong. You don't win with measured responses and restraint—you need to go berserk

-Itamar Ben Gvir, Israeli National Security Minister

I've seen people like Ben Gvir and (Finance Minister Bezalel) Smotrich criticise the (Iran deal). What is your exact proposal? You're a country of 9 million people. You can't just kill your way out of solving every single national security problem that you have

-JD Vance, US Vice President

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham is now able to challenge British Prime Minister Kier Starmer for the top post —*X @ANDYBURNHAMGM*

Ukraine is NATO's 2nd army: Zelenskyy

KYIV, 19 JUNE

- German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that Ukraine cannot become a member of the EU as it is war. It can only become an 'associate member'

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated on Friday that Ukraine has de facto become the "second army of NATO". His comments come after Ukraine struck Moscow's oil refineries and after the crucial G7 summit in France, where Kyiv secured commitments from leaders, including the US.

In comments to journalists posted on his X, Zelenskyy said that Russian President Vladimir Putin doesn't want his army to return home without a victory, and that is why the latter is afraid of ending the war.

"If there is no ceasefire backed by specific security guarantees, he will return to war," Zelenskyy stated, warning that next time, other countries may come under attack. "Putin will remain in the Kremlin until his death, and he has one goal: the restoration of the Soviet Union... Without Ukraine, this is impossible, and that's why things are so difficult."

"And that is why NATO needs us – specifically us – and

jure," he added. "This is already a fact recognised by all leaders."

Putin, meanwhile, hosted a summit of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders including those from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, East Timor and Vietnam. He hailed the increasing ties as the leaders stressed the need for a "multipolar" world order. —*Salar News*

Burnham wins UK polls; PM to fight on

LONDON, 19 JUNE

Labour's Andy Burnham, the current mayor of Greater Manchester, has won a special election for a seat in Parliament that puts him in a position to challenge embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer for leadership of the country and as leader of the Labour Party.

56-year-old Burnham won almost 55 per cent of the 45,510 votes cast for a field of more than a dozen candidates, over 9,000 more than runner-up Rob Kenyon of the anti-immigration party Reform UK.

Starmer congratulated Burnham, writing on X that voters "chose Labour's campaign of hope and optimism over division and hate." But he insisted he would fight attempts to oust him.

Burnham has led Manchester since 2017, overseeing rapid regeneration for the city. He is pledging to repeat his signature brand of "Manchesterism" on a national scale.

Starmer's popularity has cratered since he led the centre-left Labour Party to a landslide election victory in July 2024.

He has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tattered public services and ease the cost of living, and been hamstrung by repeated missteps.

Burnham will head to London to be sworn in as a lawmaker on Monday. He's likely to seek a meeting with Starmer to argue that the prime minister should exit gracefully and set a timetable for his departure. —*PTI*

The UN warned that 5,00,000 civilians could become victims of atrocities, noting the horrors of the siege of el Fasher in Sudan —*OHCHR*

UN, WEST WARN OF ATROCITIES IN SUDAN'S EL OBIED

CAIRO, 19 JUNE

Following reports of a significant troop build-up by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied forces around Sudan's El Obeid, dozens of Western nations, including the UK, Germany and France, as well as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk, warned that nearly 5,00,000 civilians are likely to be victims of mass atrocities.

Norway's ambassador told the UN Human Rights Council on Thursday that 1,00,000 internally displaced people were among those whose lives were at risk if the RSF besieged El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, currently held by the government's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).

Turk warned that the offensive could be similar to the RSF's gruesome siege of el Fasher last year, where thousands of people were killed in what UN experts said bore the hallmarks of genocide. Blood was seen from space after the offensive in October.

"States with influence have the duty to exercise it now to stop this madness," Turk warned, noting that drone warfare has been on the rise in Sudan.

North Kordofan has been the scene of the heaviest fighting in recent months of a three year war that has displaced nearly 14 million people, triggered rounds of ethnic bloodshed and spread famine. —*Salar News*

Afghanistan claims airstrikes on Pakistan 'militant bases'

KABUL, 19 JUNE

Afghanistan forces launched "air strikes" on hideouts of Islamist militants in Pakistan's Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, the Taliban's Defence Ministry said on Friday, sparking new tension between the neighbours months after they engaged in their worst conflict in years. Islamabad quickly denied the claims.

Both the provinces lie at the border with Afghanistan, but the Taliban, in its statement on X, did not provide details as to how its "air force" conducted its first major offensive in months on Thursday night. Afghanistan has no fighter jets, but is known to possess at least six aircraft and 23 helicopters, according to data from the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Taliban forces are known to have drones that have been used in fighting with Pakistan.

"These bases, allegedly used in cooperation with certain hostile intelligence circles to plan and organise attacks against Afghanistan, had previously served as staging grounds for several deadly attacks," the Afghan ministry said.

However, Pakistan's Information Ministry said that a "rudimentary drone" from Afghanistan had entered Pakistani airspace but was immediately identified and shot down. —*PTI*

Unverified reports claim that the Afghans launched a Russian-made drone at Balochistan and KP —*x*

'COMPLETELY FABRICATED'

Meloni fumes as Trump says she 'begged' for pic; envoy cancels trip

ROME, 19 JUNE

Italy's government has sharply criticised US President Donald Trump's claim that Premier Giorgia Meloni "begged" for a photo with him during the recent G7 summit, leading to the abrupt cancellation of a planned US visit by Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani. Trump made the remarks in an interview on La7, suggesting Meloni had begged for a photo-op, which she called "completely fabricated" in a video statement, concluding, "Italy and I do not beg."

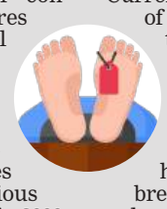
Meloni responded, "I am frankly stunned," and questioned Trump's behaviour towards allies, adding, "This isn't the first time this has happened." She criticised his inconsistent stance on key issues, citing his support for Israel's war in Gaza and disagreements over Ukraine and Iran. Italy's Defence Minister Guido Crosetto also dismissed Trump's claim, saying Meloni would never beg for a photo, "not even under threat," and expressed concern over the impact of such comments on alliances. —*PTI*

Congo Ebola cases up 40% in a week as toll passes 200

DAKAR, 19 JUNE

The Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda has claimed more than 200 lives in its first month and is the worst known outbreak at this stage, with up to 35,000 suspected potential contacts, Africa's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday.

With 894 confirmed cases so far, the current outbreak is three times worse than a previous outbreak in Uganda in 2000, which had 281 cases at the same point, said Dr Wessam Mankoula, a medical epidemiologist at Africa CDC. The outbreak was confirmed on 15 May, weeks after it was suspected to have begun.



Contact tracing remains an issue due to the area's remoteness and ongoing conflict in Ituri province, Dr Mankoula said. Currently only around 15% of contacts have been tracked.

Of the over $900 million pledged to fight the outbreak, only $90 million has been released to help fight the outbreak, and of 540 personnel needed, Africa CDC only has 84 so far.

"We are still far from controlling the situation of this outbreak," said Mankoula. —*PTI*

-ANI-

Gold extends losses to 4th day, silver falls too

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Gold prices fell for the fourth consecutive session, dropping Rs 2,840 to Rs 1.5 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital, amidst a rally in the US dollar. Silver also declined sharply, reaching a over two-month low of Rs 2.4 lakh per kg, down Rs 8,040 from Thursday's close. The All India Sarafa Association noted that the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity decreased to Rs 1,50,600 per 10 grams, while silver traded near 7 April levels.

Analysts attributed the decline to rising US dollar strength, with the dollar index at a one-year high, impacting market sentiment. Internationally, spot gold fell USD 60.70 (1.44 per cent) to USD 4,148.45 per ounce, and silver dropped 1.51 per cent to USD 64.73. "Gold is trading lower in overseas trade as the metal remains vulnerable amid hawkish Federal Reserve's repricing and uncertainty over US-Iran talks," said Praveen Singh at Mirae Asset. —*PTI*

Rupee up slightly to 94.34 as US-Iran peace deal delayed

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

The rupee closed at 94.34 (provisional), gaining just 6 paise against the US dollar, amid a firming dollar index and rising crude oil prices.

The currency opened at 94.30 and traded between 94.20 and 94.52. Market sentiment was cautious due to the US-Iran peace deal uncertainty, with US Vice President JD Vance postponing talks with Iran. Forex analyst Dilip Parmar said, "The rupee remains the lead performer among Asian peers, energised by capital inflows and cooling oil prices." Meanwhile, the dollar index dipped 0.08 per cent to 100.76, and Brent crude fell 0.65 per cent to USD 79.33. The Sensex declined 607.08 points to 76,802.90, and Nifty dropped 154.90 points to 24,013.10. —*PTI*

Global funds gain 3% stake in Anthem Biosciences

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Societe Generale, Prudential Hong Kong, and Ghisallo Capital Management bought a combined 3.05 per cent stake in Anthem Biosciences for Rs 1,275 crore. The shares traded flat at Rs 798.25 on NSE. They acquired 1,71,14,604 shares at Rs 744.80 each, representing the stake. Other investors included Nordea Asset Management, Integrated Core Strategies Asia Pte Ltd, and Social Protection Fund. Domestic funds like SBI, HDFC, Kotak, UTI, Edelweiss, Canara Robeco, and others also participated. Promoter Aruna Ganesh sold an equal amount, reducing her stake from 74.68 per cent to 71.63 per cent. Anthem Biosciences Limited is a fully integrated Contract Research, Development, and Manufacturing Organisation (CRDMO). —*PTI*

Reliance bets big on AI; Jio gets $4B IPO

The Ambanis to make India's most affordable AI; Jio will be nations' biggest-ever IPO

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani on Friday unveiled a roadmap for Reliance Industries' next phase of growth across AI, satellite broadband, clean energy and consumer products during the company's 49th annual general meeting.

JIO TO GO PUBLIC

Simultaneously, its digital unit, Jio Platforms, filed a draft red herring prospectus for a fresh issue of up to 27 crore shares. Sources familiar with the matter said the offering could raise about Rs 37,700 crore (USD 4 billion), valuing the company at roughly USD 137 billion.

"The Board of Jio Platforms has approved the Draft Red Herring Prospectus earlier today, and it will be filed with SEBI today," Ambani told shareholders at the company's 49th annual general meeting. Shortly after Ambani ended his speech, the DRHP was filed with market regulator SEBI.

The offering aims to unlock value from Jio Platforms, whose telecom arm has grown into the world's second-largest mobile operator by subscribers in a single country after China Mobile.

Jio reported a revenue of Rs 1.47 lakh crore and profit after tax of about Rs 30,000 crore in FY26. The company counts Meta and Google among its largest strategic investors

Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani addresses the 49th Annual General Meeting of Reliance Industries Limited in Mumbai on Tuesday. Ambani says Reliance succession plan near completion as children Akash, Isha & Anant Amabani take over day-to-day operations -*PTI*

SUCCESSION PLAN

Ambani said the IPO process is being led by his three children — Akash Ambani, Isha Ambani and Anant Ambani — who are increasingly taking charge of the conglomerate's key businesses.

The annual meeting also offered the clearest update yet on succession at India's most valuable company. "The generational transfer of day-to-day management at Reliance is almost complete," Ambani said.

Isha Ambani now leads consumer businesses, Akash Ambani oversees technology operations, and Anant Ambani heads the group's energy businesses, while a cadre of younger executives is being groomed across the organisation.

During the annual meeting, the Reliance Chairman gave the floor to his twins—Akash and Isha—to present a business plan for the telecom and retail segments, respectively.

THE FUTURE IS AI

A year after announcing Reliance Intelligence, the group's AI venture, Ambani said the company was moving from planning to execution. Reliance has partnered with Google, Meta and Nvidia to develop AI infrastructure and services tailored for India.

The company plans to build an AI infrastructure capable of supporting services across Indian languages and sectors ranging from agriculture and healthcare to education and enterprise applications.

"Reliance Intelligence is designed to disrupt the economics of artificial intelligence by making it highly affordable and widely accessible in India," **Mukesh Ambani** said. He went on to say that the initiative aims to democratise AI adoption by lowering costs and ensuring that advanced AI capabilities are available to consumers, enterprises and developers across the country.

CLEAN ENERGY PUSH

Ambani also reiterated Reliance's aggressive push into clean energy, describing India as being at the beginning of an energy "supercycle" while remaining heavily dependent on imported fuels.

"The world built its old energy on Middle Eastern oil. The world will now build its new energy on Indian sunshine," Ambani said.

The group's traditional oil-to-chemicals business remains its largest earnings contributor, but Ambani said Reliance is reshaping the segment to focus increasingly on chemicals and advanced materials rather than transportation fuels.

"In the long run, we will convert all the oil we refine into chemicals and new materials," he said.

RETAIL ARM

Reliance Retail crossed 20,000 stores during the year and plans to expand manufacturing capabilities in food, apparel, electronics and consumer goods, while building an export platform for Indian brands — targeting USD 125 billion to USD 150 billion of exports by 2032.

Talking aboy the company at large, Amabni said to shareholders that "The future of your company is not only in safe hands, but in hands that will take Reliance to far greater heights." —*PTI*

Jio plans indigenous satellites for broadband

IPO-bound Jio aims to advance satellite connectivity using indigenous communication satellites, Jio Platforms Managing Director Akash Ambani announced at Reliance Industries' 49th Annual General Meeting.

Amabani said that Jio is partnering with a global satellite provider and exploring a sovereign Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellation to bring connectivity to remote villages, islands, and border areas beyond the reach of its ground network.

This initiative aims to boost India's self-reliance (Atmanirbharta) and global footprint in the satellite broadband sector, which is currently dominated by foreign companies like Musk's Starlink and France's Eutelsat. -*PTI*

INFOSYS STOCKS DOWN 9%

Accenture's revenue fall drags mkt down

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Stock market benchmark indices ended lower on Friday, snapping a five-day rally, dragged by heavy selling in IT stocks after Accenture trimmed its full-year revenue growth guidance. The BSE IT index tanked 5.18 per cent. Sensex declined 607 points, and the Nifty fell to 24,013.10.

Accenture's shares plunged nearly 20 per cent, while Infosys tanked 8.59 per cent, Tech Mahindra fell 7 per cent, Tata Consultancy Services dropped 6.52 per cent, HCL Tech tumbled 6 per cent and Wipro dipped 4.29 per cent on the BSE.

"Because Indian IT firms rely heavily on the same global pipeline for discretionary tech projects, this shift in Accenture's forecast serves as a macroscopic warning for the entire sector, prompting investor's selloffs," Shashwat Singh, Fundamental Analyst- Bajaj Broking, said. Accenture CEO Julie Sweet urged investors to hold their judgment, saying the company remains well-positioned as enterprises deepen AI adoption.

The guidance cut, however, rattled markets, triggering a sell-off in Indian IT majors' ADRs (American Depositary Receipts), according to VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited.

Sentiment was further dampened by renewed geopolitical uncertainty after US Vice President JD Vance postponed his visit to Switzerland to meet Iranian negotiators for a peace deal. BSE Sensex tanked 815.02 points to 76,594.96 in late morning trade, while the NSE Nifty declined 212.85 points to 23,959.95.

Markets had extended their rally to a fifth straight session on Thursday, with the Sensex climbing 254.36 points (0.33 per cent) to 77,409.98 and the Nifty rising 82.30 points (0.34 per cent) to 24,168. —*Agencies*

Crude prices rise as Hormuz traffic slows

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

International oil prices have once again started rising as the peace agreement between Iran and the United States remains fraught. Traders are still examining the implications of the memorandum of understanding between the two countries on ending the war and reopening the crucial Strait of Hormuz shipping corridor.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, rose 0.65 percent on Friday, after falling 0.9 percent earlier in the day. Brent futures for August delivery stood at $80.37, taking the benchmark above the $80 threshold for the first time since Wednesday. The development comes as Israel attacked Lebanon and carried out operations against Hezbollah in the south of the country on Friday. The actions pose a threat to the fragile US-Iran peace deal. Meanwhile ship operators are still hesitant to access the Strait of Hormuz, despite the route being open, due to fears for the safety of the vessels and the crew.

Tankers and cargo vessels are seen in the Gulf of Oman -*AI*-

On Thursday, the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO), a global organisation representing tanker owners and operators, said that further clarity is needed for vessels to pass safely through the channel. Normally, around 120 to 130 vessels travelled through the waterway in a day, carrying about one-fifth of the global oil supply. —*Agencies*

Sebi reintroduces exchange buybacks

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

Sebi has approved several key proposals, including reintroducing open market share buybacks via stock exchanges to ensure equitable opportunity for shareholders. It also relaxed intraday borrowing norms for mutual funds, simplified securities transfer procedures post-investor death, and aided to revive agricultural derivatives trading.

Additionally, the regulator will establish 'GARUDA,' a green-channel mechanism allowing alternative investment funds (AIFs) to begin fundraising within 10 working days of filing their placement memorandums, significantly cutting down the current 30-day timeline. —*PTI*

Sitharaman inaugurates largest organic spice facility in Meghalaya

RI-BHOI, 19 JUNE

Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** inaugurated the North East's largest organic spice processing unit at Bhoirymbong in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district. The facility aims to boost value addition, exports, and market access for thousands of regional organic farmers. The unit, established under the Eastern Ri-Bhoi Organic Farmer Producer Company Ltd (FPC), is promoted through the Centre's Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCD-NER).

Sitharaman was accompanied by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma and Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang Golay. The Finance Minister's Office described it as "the first organically certified spice processing unit in North East India," expected to become a landmark in organic agriculture. With a capacity of over 10,000 metric tonnes annually, it handles spices like ginger, turmeric, black pepper, and chilli, certified under NPOP and EU standards, enabling access to premium domestic and international markets.

The project benefits around 5,500 farmers, improving value addition, reducing post-harvest losses, and creating employment. The Rs 30-32 crore facility is supported by central and state schemes, demonstrating how investments can transform smallholder agriculture into a sustainable, viable sector. —*ANI*

INDIA PROBES CHEMICAL IMPORTS

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

India launched an anti-dumping investigation into imports of a chemical used in tyre and rubber products from China and Japan, the commerce ministry announced. The move follows a complaint by Atul Ltd to the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), claiming that low-cost imports of Resorcinol are harming the domestic industry.

The DGTR stated, "On the basis of the duly substantiated application filed by the applicant and having satisfied itself, on the basis of the prima facie evidence submitted by the applicant, regarding dumping of the subject goods... the authority hereby initiates an anti-dumping investigation."

The directorate will assess the existence, extent, and impact of dumping from China and Japan. If proven, the DGTR may recommend duties, subject to final approval by the finance ministry. —*PTI*

India's forex reserves fall by $9 billion

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

India's foreign exchange reserves declined by USD 9.985 billion to USD 671.625 billion during the week ending 12 June, due to a sharp decrease in gold reserves, the Resrve Bank of India (RBI) announced on Friday.

In the previous week, reserves had fallen by USD 711 million to USD 681.610 billion.

For the week ending June 12, foreign currency assets — a key component of reserves — increased USD 846 million to USD 544.290 billion, the RBI data showed. The RBI stated that the value of gold reserves decreased USD 10.754 billion to USD 103.821 billion during the week.

Additionally, special drawing rights (SDRs) were down USD 66 million to USD 18.699 billion, while India's reserve position with the IMF declined USD 11 million to USD 4.815 billion in the same period.

The decline was mainly driven by fluctuations in gold and currency asset values. —*PTI*

Banks' demand low at RBI VRR auction

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

The demand from banks was muted at the RBI three-day variable rate repo (VRR) auction held on Friday, indicating limited demand for short-term funds from banks.

The RBI received bids worth Rs 16,750 crore from banks at the VRR auction against notified amount of Rs 1 lakh crore.

The RBI accepted the entire amount at the auction at a cut-off and weighted average rate of 5.26 per cent.

Meanwhile, private sector lender Bandhan Bank on Friday said it has increased interest rates on deposits for NRI customers.

The bank will now offer an interest rate of 7.1 per cent on US dollar-denominated Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) (FCNR(B)) deposits of USD 1 million and above for tenures ranging from 3 to 5years, said a company release. For deposits up to USD 1 million, the interest rate has increased to 7 per cent, the bank said in a release.

The offering comes in the wake of the RBI's decision to introduce a USD-Rupee forex swap facility for banks on fresh FCNR(B) deposits mobilised for a minimum tenor of three years and up to five years. —*PTI*

AWKWARD MOMENT WITH SAM

India AI Summit disorganised: Anthropic CEO

SAN FRANCISCO, 19 JUNE

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei has described the stage management at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 as "extremely disorganised", explaining that an awkward moment in which he and OpenAI Chief Sam Altman appeared reluctant to hold hands on stage was the result of confusion rather than rivalry.

Speaking to Bloomberg Originals' The Circuit, Amodei said participants were called on stage at the last minute and their positions were repeatedly changed.

"There was Narendra Modi up there suddenly telling everyone to hold hands," he said, adding that the impromptu instructions caught the technology leaders off guard during the group photograph.

At India's AI Summit, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei is seen not holding hands with and Open AI's Sam Altman -*PIB*

Amodei stressed that his remarks were not aimed specifically at India. "If you've ever been to one of these summits, I'm not saying anything bad about India in particular, but all these international summits with heads of state are super disorganised," he said.

When interviewer Emily Chang pointed out that "everyone else held hands", Amodei replied: "I don't know, I don't know what to tell you."

Chang also raised the legal dispute between Altman and Elon Musk and suggested that if leaders building the world's most important technology could not cooperate publicly, it raised concerns about collaboration on existential risks posed by AI.

Amodei rejected the suggestion that AI leaders do not trust one another. He cited his 15-year relationship with Google DeepMind Chief Demis Hassabis, noting that Anthropic buys computing power from Google and exchanges ideas on AI safety. —*Agencies*

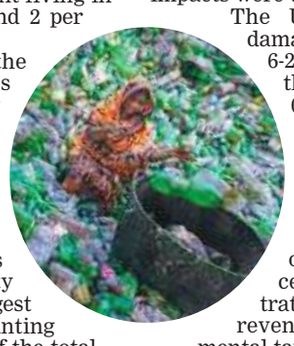
'10% of world's consumers cause $5.7T env damage'

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

The top 10 per cent of global consumers cause USD 5.7T in annual environmental damage. With 60 per cent living in the US and EU, and 2 per cent in India.

Published in the Communications Sustainability journal, the study looked at six countries — Brazil, China, Egypt, Germany, India, and the US.

Researchers found biodiversity loss to be the biggest contributor, accounting for 47-56 per cent of the total damage bill, followed by climate change at 36-45 per cent.



The annual damage bill per person in the global top 10 per cent averaged USD 2,300-7,500, but climbs to USD 19,000-63,000 in the US, where per-person impacts were the highest.

The US' per-person damage bill is about 6-20 per cent of their income or 0.8-3 per cent of their wealth, the study found.

The costs "highlight the responsibility of the top 10 per cent and illustrate the potential revenue of environmental taxes if the polluter-pays principle is adopted," the authors said. —*PTI*

RED CARDS AND POOR DEFENCE SEND Qatar to its worst World Cup loss

VANCOUVER, 19 JUNE

QAT 0 — CAN 6

Qatar's World Cup defeat to Canada on Thursday went so awry that goalkeeper Mahmoud Abunada appeared to break down in tears after the final whistle, receiving comfort from a teammate and Canada's Jacob Schaffelburg.

"It was a tough match, because everything that could go wrong, did go wrong," coach Julen Lopetegui said. "That's how football is sometimes."

Qatar played two men down for most of the second half after a pair of red cards and went on to lose 6-0, the worst defeat in the Persian Gulf country's short World Cup history. Qatar debuted in the tournament as the host in 2022 and lost 2-0 to Ecuador, 3-1 to Senegal and 2-0 to the Netherlands.

The second red card was issued to midfielder Assim Madibo, who tackled Canada's Ismaël Koné from behind, breaking Koné's lower left leg. Koné was stretchered off the field and taken to a hospital for surgery.

Koné's replacement, Nathan Saliba, buried a 20-yard free kick in the 64th minute for Canada's fourth goal.

Controlling rebounds was a struggle for the Qatari defenders, who could not clear the ball after two of Abunada's saves. Canada had 10 shots on goal while Qatar had none.

After Canada's postgame huddle, Lopetegui and Canada coach Jesse Marsch had a heated exchange.

Marsch said Madibo apologized to Koné after the game, but he took issue with the way Qatar players reacted after the injury.

"I don't understand a reaction from their entire bench to try to start a fight about it being a red card when a clear foul just happened that broke a player's leg," Marsch said. "So, strange behavior."

Qatar is last in Group B but still has a chance to reach the knockout round. It faces Bosnia-Herzegovina on Wednesday in Seattle. —*PTI*

Koné to undergo surgery after injury during Qatar match

VANCOUVER, 19 JUNE

Canada's historic first World Cup victory was overshadowed by a gruesome injury to midfielder Ismaël Koné.

Koné injured his left leg when Qatar midfielder Assim Madibo tackled him from behind in the second half, sending the 24-year-old to the ground. Madibo was sent off for the tackle on Koné, who was protectively surrounded by his teammates while he was treated on the field before he was stretchered off.

"I saw his leg. I saw that something wasn't right," Canada captain Stephen Eustáquio said. He was one of the first players to reach Koné.

Koné was whisked to a local hospital where he was preparing for surgery while surrounded by family, Canada coach Marsch said. He said the injury happened t in front of the bench, and you could hear the "bones snap." — PTI

Canada's Ismael Kone falls after getting injured during the World Cup Group B soccer match against Qatar in Vancouver in British Columbia —*PTI*

Switzerland defeats Bosnia-Herzegovina 4-1

INGLEWOOD, 19 JUNE

Substitute Johan Manzambi scored his first World Cup goal on an outstanding volley in the 74th minute, and Switzerland erupted late for a 4-1 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina on Thursday to take control of its group. Vargas scored in the 84th minute for the Swiss shortly after Tarik Muharemovic was sent off for a dangerous tackle, leaving Bosnia with 10 men.

Manzambi scored again in the 90th on a pass from Vargas, and captain Granit Xhaka converted from the penalty spot with the final kick of the game in stoppage time.

Ermin Mahmic scored in second-half injury time for Bosnia, which still has a legitimate chance of reaching the knockout stage of only its second World Cup after hanging with Switzerland deep into the second half.

Switzerland followed up its disappointing 1-1 draw with Qatar last week by largely dominating play against the momentum-laden Dragons, who were unbeaten in their last nine matches.

But the Swiss couldn't break through until a moment of brilliance from Manzambi, a 20-year-old Geneva native who plays for German club Freiburg — and then Muharemovic's red card changed the match.—*PTI*

Mexico beat S Korea 1-0, reach knockout stage

South Korea's Son Heung-min (7) controls the ball against Mexico's Sanchez (2) during a Group A match at Zapopan in Mexico —*PTI*

GUADALAJARA, 19 JUNE

Mexico took advantage of a defensive blunder by South Korea to win 1-0 and become the first team to advance to the knockout stage of the World Cup.

It marks a major triumph for a team that failed to get out of the group stage in 2022, and now has won twice on home soil in front of jubilant crowds. Mexico players celebrated at midfield and waved to the fans who cheered and sang from the packed stands at Estadio Akron.

Luis Romo scored in the 50th minute after South Korea goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu collided with defender Lee Gi-hyuk and dropped the ball inside the area. Romo easily found the open net after picking up the loose ball.

The South Koreans nearly equalized in the 87th minute when Mexico goalkeeper Raúl Rangel stopped a header from close range by Cho Gue-sung, then made an even better save of Yang Hyun-jun's attempt on the rebound, extending his right arm to keep the ball from crossing the line.

Mexico won Group A with six points in two matches, three more than South Korea and five more than the Czech Republic and South Africa, who drew 1-1 earlier Thursday in Atlanta.

The top two teams from each group move on to the knockout stage, along with the best eight third-place teams. A round of 32 is being played for the first time at the World Cup after the tournament was expanded to 48 teams. —*PTI*

Morocco star Hakimi to be tried for rape

Paris, 19 June

A French appeals court confirmed on Friday that Paris Saint-Germain and Morocco star player Achraf Hakimi will stand trial in a rape case. The defender, who is currently playing with Morocco at the World Cup after winning the Champions League for a second straight year with PSG, had appealed a February decision by an investigative judge. That ruling followed recommendations from public prosecutors that Hakimi should face trial.

The Versailles appeals court's decision was released just hours before Morocco takes on Scotland in their Group C match. Morocco drew 1-1 with Brazil in its opening game. Hakimi, one of the best right backs in the world, denies charges. He faced charges of rape in March 2023 after a 24-year-old woman said she was raped by Hakimi at his home in Paris. A date for the trial has yet to be announced. —*PTI*

Neymar ruled out of Brazil's second match

MORRISTOWN, 19 JUNE

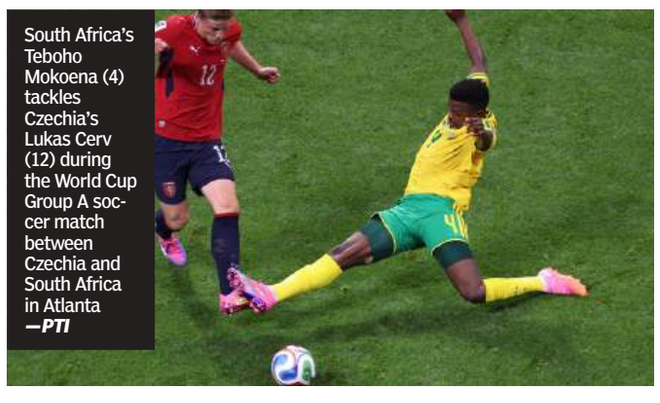
Neymar has been ruled out of Brazil's second World Cup match because of a lingering calf injury. The Brazilian soccer confederation said on Thursday that Neymar wasn't going to travel with the rest of the squad for Friday's match against Haiti in Philadelphia.

"He will remain in New Jersey to optimize the final phase of his recovery process," the confederation said. The Brazilian confederation said the 34-year-old Santos player will continue his recovery at the facilities of the team's hotel.

Neymar was back on the training field for the first time on Tuesday, doing physical conditioning exercises. He rejoined his teammates on Wednesday, being applauded by them after getting on the field.

Neymar has yet to practice in fuller sessions with the rest of the team since reporting to Brazil's squad while nursing an injured right leg.

Looking to play in his fourth World Cup, Neymar had undergone tests on his right calf on Monday to assess the injury that he sustained while playing with Santos on 17 May. —*PTI*



South Africa's Teboho Mokoena (4) tackles Czechia's Lukas Cerv (12) during the World Cup Group A soccer match between Czechia and South Africa in Atlanta —*PTI*

SA keeps its World Cup hopes alive

ATLANTA, 19 JUNE

Teboho Mokoena started the game with tears in his eyes and finished it with a smile on his face after converting a second-half penalty in South Africa's 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic on Thursday at the World Cup.

Thapelo Maseko's long range shot late in the match caught the hand of Czech opponent Pavel Sulc in the area.

Mokoena, who was shown on camera with tears rolling down his cheeks during the pre-game national anthem, stepped up to the penalty spot and sent his shot low past Czech goalkeeper Kovar.

The South Africa midfielder said he was overwhelmed before kick-off, thinking about his late grandfather.

"I know, wherever he is, he would be proud of me," Mokoena said. "I just felt his presence in that moment. I thought if he was here, he would be proud of me because I know he believed in me when nobody believed in me."

South Africa faced some strong criticism following its 2-0 loss to co-host Mexico, which raised the prospect of the country extending its run of never having advanced to the knockout phase of a World Cup — even as host in 2010.

South Africa will next face South Korea on Wednesday in Group A, but will be without Mokoena, who was suspended after his second yellow card.

The Czechs lost to South Korea 2-1 in their opening match and will likely need to beat Mexico in their final game on Wednesday to advance. —*PTI*

—*ANI*

Yuvraj Singh to join Delhi Capitals as batting coach

NEW DELHI, 19 JUNE

Former white-ball stalwart Yuvraj Singh is all set to join Delhi Capitals as its batting coach for the 2027 season, IPL sources tracking the development said on Friday. Yuvraj, India's player of the tournament in both 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup, has worked as a personal mentor for current India skipper Shubman Gill and world's No. 1 ranked T20 batter Abhishek Sharma in recent years. Even Rishabh Pant had sought Yuvraj's advice when he underwent a slump in form. The assignment with Delhi Capitals will be Yuvraj's first coaching assignment in the cash-rich league. Yuvraj Singh played the last of his 132 IPL matches in 2019 for Mumbai Indians before calling time on his competitive career. —PTI

3rd India vs Afghanistan ODI: Jaiswal, Rahul, Rana in focus

CHENNAI, 19 JUNE

Along with a dominance-extending series clean sweep, India will eye substantial runs from KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal in the third and final ODI against Afghanistan here on Saturday.

While Rahul's spot in the one-day squad has never really been in doubt, Jaiswal would welcome a heavy knock to stake his claim for a space in the already-crowded top-order.

Jaiswal was brought back to the 50-over format for the first time since December 2025, and he was dismissed for 4 in the second match against the Afghans at Lucknow.

The left-hander had made an unbeaten 116 against South Africa at Visakhapatnam in his previous appearance but since then the return of Ishan Kishan has added one more contender to the top-order positions.

Kishan did no harm to his reputation with a hundred at Lucknow, and skipper Shubman Gill dropped himself to No. 3 to accommodate Jaiswal. But once Virat Kohli returns to the side after recovering from his hamstring injury, the batting superstar is certain to occupy the No. 3 slot.

India have added Harshit Rana into the squad ahead of Chennai ODI after completing rehabilitation at BCCI Centre of Excellence, and the pacer might come in for Arshdeep Singh, who has played two matches in this series.

It will also give India the luxury of having a handy batter down the order in the absence of injured Nitish Kumar Reddy, besides the management and selectors can assess his readiness in a game situation ahead of the UK tour. —*PTI*

India's Yashasvi Jaiswal plays a shot during a practice session ahead of the third and final ODI cricket match of a series between India and Afghanistan, in Chennai —*PTI*

FIH PRO LEAGUE

India concede 2 goals, lose 1-2 to Germany

ROTTERDAM, 19 JUNE

India inexplicably conceded two late goals to lose to reigning world champions Germany 1-2 in their FIH Pro League match here on Thursday.

The two sides were goalless at the half time before Jugraj Singh struck from a penalty corner in the 38th minute to give India the lead in the tough match.

It looked like India would notch a rare back-to-back win against the Germans who, however, equalised four minutes from the final hooter through a penalty corner conversion by Justus Weigand (56th).

The world champions then snatched a win from the jaws of defeat with Jakob Brilla (60th) scoring from yet another penalty corner with just a few seconds left in the match.

The match, though, was dull and drab for most part. India earned three penalty corners as against five by the Germans.

India had stunned Germany 3-1 on Wednesday in a memorable win that coincided with Manpreet Singh becoming the country's most-capped player. —*PTI*

India's Jugraj Singh celebrates scoring against Germany in the FIH Pro League in Rotterdam —*X/HOCKEYINDIA*

Iniyan emerges champion at Global Chess Festival

MUMBAI, 19 JUNE

Grandmaster Iniyan Pa dominating proceedings from start to finish to emerge champion in the masters category of Global Chess Festival here on Friday. Already in sight of the title after the penultimate round, the 24-year-old national champion settled for a quick draw against Ajay Santhosh Parvathareddy to claim the title in his debut appearance to pocket the winner's purse of Rs 8 lakh. Nithin Babu clinched the Challenger Category and Madhvendra Pratap Sharma triumphed in the Junior Master Category.

GM Iniyan amassed 7.5 points to emerge champion, maintaining an unbeaten stint while conceding only three draws. Savchenko had to settle for a draw against Aakash Sharadchandra Dalvi and finished second with 6.5 points.

Babu, seeded sixth, defeated Swain in an intense battle in the Challenger section.

Viresh Sharnarthi, who had been leading the event with six wins from six matches, crashed and finished 10th.

Nithin took home Rs 3 lakhs and a trophy. —*PTI*